



Phoenix Edition

HALF ♦ ♦
HOURS ♦
WITH ♦ ♦
THE ♦ ♦ ♦
CHRIST

HALF-HOURS WITH THE CHRIST

Heaven is not reached at a single bound ;

*We must climb the ladder by which we rise
From the lowly earth to the vaulted skies,
And we mount to its summit round by round.*

*We rise by the things that are under our feet :
By what we have mastered of good or gain,
By the pride deposed and the passion slain,
And the vanquished ill that we hourly meet.*

*We must follow the Christ from day to day ;
He has marked the path to the throne of God,
Lifting the soul from its common clod
To climb the steeps of the heavenly way.*

HALF-HOURS WITH THE CHRIST

BY
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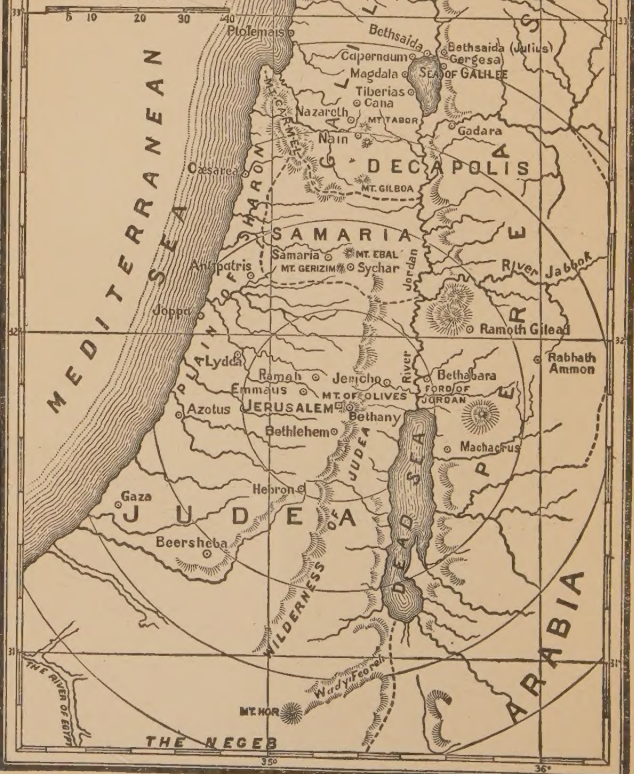
PREFACE

MANY books have been written to transfer the reader back to the days of Christ in Judea and Galilee. This aims to bring the Christ into our time. We greatly need to see Jesus present at the dawn of the twentieth century—this man of Galilee who lives in the Gospels. How may we bring our lives into touch with him, into the sweet assurance that he walks and talks with us by the way? The writer has known one woman who lived in the sunshine of his abiding presence, and taught others to behold his glory. This story presents many facts from her real life. May she continue to win others by this record, as she has by her happy, helpful teaching !

PALESTINE

IN THE TIME OF
CHRIST

Scale of Miles



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HALF-HOURS WITH THE CHRIST

CHAPTER I

AN ANXIOUS QUESTION

MRS. LYDIA BROWN had a hard question to solve. It was, however, the most interesting question of earth or heaven. She had two bright children now in their early teens, that molding period when character is soon made or marred. After years of ever-widening influence she seemed to herself to be left with their care as her sole mission.

Mrs. Brown was a rare woman, whose experience had been varied and marvelous. Her own conversion at the age of twelve was simply a happy surrender of herself to Christ as her Saviour, to enter into his own most intimate friendship. From that hour her joyous confidence made Lydia a happy playmate, refining the very sports of childhood and drawing other children to her cheerful and unselfish amusements.

Her childhood home was one mile from a

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woman's college, in Ohio, from which she graduated with high honors when she was eighteen years of age. She was at once engaged as the assistant principal in a village high school, where her personal magnetism and unselfish interest in the young people started currents of influence that revolutionized the town.

The next year she was appointed a teacher in the college where she had graduated. Here for five years she was the beloved of all under her care. Her happy faith had thus far filled her life with constant sunshine, for a pleasant duty had always waited for her willing hand.

Then she came to an unexpected crossroads. A young man who had been accepted by the Board to go as missionary to China, wrote asking her to consider the question of united hearts and united service in a foreign field. Every affection of her heart had intertwined with her work as teacher in this school for young women. She had met David Brown, six years before, when she was a teacher in the high school. She had greatly respected his purpose and sacrifices in securing an education, and had known of his consecration to this work. She did not know that for all these years this young man had secretly cherished the hope that he should reach the shining heights of culture and char-

An Anxious Question

acter where he might venture to ask her hand. Never until now had there arisen one serious thought that she was to be invited to share his life-work.

She replied that it was a question so great that she must pause to seek wisdom higher than her own. The young man then came and pressed his suit with a devotion that found a response from her deepest womanly affection. She became the betrothed of the consecrated missionary.

Then she began preparation for the voyage across the ocean. She saw a great work ready for her hand, all divinely planned ; hence her faith smiled as she bade good-bye to friends and native land. For ten years they toiled together, founding a most promising mission at Canton ; then they returned for a year's rest.

While in America Mr. Brown was taken with typhoid fever and died. Mrs. Brown was suddenly left with two bright children demanding care and education. She moved into a cottage which her slender means enabled her to buy in her native town. She went to her kitchen with the same sense of divine appointment with which she had gone as missionary to China. Through tears of bereavement she smiled her reconciliation to the new duty.

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Seven years passed, and Mrs. Brown had made her Ohio cottage very sacred in this retirement with her children. Fannie, the daughter, was past fifteen, and Barton nearing fourteen. Their mother had been their most constant companion out of school hours. Fannie had inherited much of her mother's cheerful, buoyant spirits. Barton was mature in thought, but of strong will and impetuous temper. He had one redeeming quality, a strong affection for his mother.

These two now began to be invited to the neighborhood parties, with many who were under the dancing master's training, and to whom worldly amusements were exceedingly fascinating. The sprightliness and courtesy of Mrs. Brown's children made them great favorites, and they were forming ardent friendships.

This was the hard question which Mrs. Lydia Brown was called to solve: How should she still keep these two interested in all that cultivates mind and heart for beautiful Christian lives, and prepare them for large usefulness, when their own social nature, their happy companions, and fascinating amusements, all combined to draw them into a giddy round of worldly pleasure?

If this mother, with all her experience in two hemispheres and her rare tact and talent

An Anxious Question

in winning others where she wished, found it a difficult problem to solve, what must it be for the ordinary careworn mother without this teacher's rare experience and special culture?

It may interest parents burdened with the same anxious question, to follow this woman in her plans. It should interest every young person stirred with that searching question, "How can I make the most of life?" What boy has never paused and wondered what the answer shall be?

The evening came when Fannie and Barton were invited to a neighbor's to unite with two other young people in arranging a series of winter evening entertainments. George and Amelia Bancroft lived in the beautiful home of a wealthy banker near by, and their parents were devoted friends of Mrs. Brown. George was past sixteen, and was just coming to lead in all the youthful society of the neighborhood. There was already a growing excitement to know who should form his set. As Fannie and Barton were permitted to go, with this object understood, to spend the evening at Mr. Bancroft's, it brought a very important crisis.

CHAPTER II

ENTERTAINMENTS

“MOTHER, we shall decide nothing fully until you and Mrs. Bancroft give consent,” said Fannie Brown as she and Barton left the cottage.

“Thank you, my daughter,” said Mrs. Brown as she wished her children a pleasant evening. Then the thoughtful mother pondered the question of this important hour. She desired to enchant these young people, not only her own children, but her neighbors’ also, with something safer for their winter evenings than the social dance and the card table.

It must be something toward which they are not driven, but drawn. Can she find it? She took her Bible with an uplifted prayer that she might be guided to some thought of Scripture by which the Christian life might be made entrancing in its study. She had been an expert in innocent home games, by which her children were hitherto held in her affectionate grasp in the most tender attachment to the humble cottage. But she well knew that they had now come to the age when no games she

could invent would be so attractive as the amusements with a score of merry young people of their own age at an evening party.

But was it not possible that some phase of Christian truth might be found for eager, immortal souls, by combining knowledge and loving fellowship and happy association, that would be deeper satisfaction than mere worldly pleasure? At least might not such a course of evening Christian culture be arranged as should greatly modify the spell of youthful frivolity and refine their happy associations?

With these thoughts she opened her Bible, and her eyes fell upon these words concerning the youthful days of Jesus: "And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit . . . and the grace of God was upon him." Then suddenly there flashed upon her mind a plan of work which she had undertaken ten years before for a company of young Confucians in Canton. It was to follow for one hour each day the life of Jesus from his birth in Bethlehem to his final ascension from Mount Olivet. She had brought a group of young men from high official rank into entranced interest. In the midst of her success they were compelled to return home for rest. It had always been a mystery why her bright plans had been so suddenly snatched away.

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Ah, how that fascinating dream all came back to her again ! The wondrous life of Christ unfolded to a company of royal youths until they should turn with eager delight to his service !

In a moment she felt a thrill of delight that God had been preparing her on the other side of the world through all those fruitful plans which had been so suddenly cut short, for this crisis in the education of her own children. More clearly than ever before there stood out to her mind the life of the child Jesus in the home at Nazareth. Mary and Jesus in hallowed association at that ancient hearth—the mind of Christ expanding with heavenly wisdom—that marvelous motherhood of Mary in charge of the Christ who was to bless the world ! “What a mission,” thought she, “was granted to the mother of our Lord ! But ’tis the same mission to every mother ; she is commissioned to watch the Christ-life develop in the mind and heart of her own child.”

As these thoughts swayed her mind she felt that the true Christian home was of the same interest to our Father in heaven as that home in which Jesus dwelt at Nazareth. Now her highest mission was presented to her in clear vision.

She went at once to the beautiful home of

Lyman Bancroft to return with Fannie and Barton. "What plans have you made for the winter, George?" she eagerly asked the oldest of the four as they welcomed her to the conference in the library.

"Oh, it is so difficult to suit so many tastes," said George; "we do not want to grieve mother, who thinks we ought not to give the whole winter to dancing and cards. Anything else we have considered seems dull and stupid; so we have made little progress. I am glad you have come to stop our fruitless discussions."

Mrs. Brown's face fairly shone with her new hope. "I had a beautiful vision while alone to-night," she said; "I came to consult with you four to see if it might not become a reality." All were now eager to know what new scheme had given the ever calm and cheerful face such unusual brightness.

"Tell us, mother," said Fannie. "If it has made you so happy in the very thought of it, we should like to catch some of that joy too."

So Mrs. Brown then told them how great a privilege came to her the last year she was in China. For years she had longed to get access to the homes of the highest ranks, that she might teach their young people. At last it came. One day a leading official came to

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inspect her mission school. He saw the improvement in a class of native boys. He asked Mrs. Brown if she would take his two sons a part of each day to give them some knowledge of Western civilization, preparatory to travel in Europe. She told him that if he would arrange a class from distinguished families, such as he would choose for their associates, it would give her pleasure to instruct them.

It was arranged. Ten boys approaching manhood were given to her charge. They were choice boys, of such advantages as few have in that land. They were anxious to know of life, manners, customs, laws, in the countries whence came the great merchants and statesmen and consuls that visited China. After many months of cautious teaching she had won the confidence of the distinguished official who had so guardedly put these royal youths in her care.

“Then,” said Mrs. Brown, “I ventured to tell him that all dates in Europe and America were kept from the birth of Jesus Christ, and that in the best nations of Western civilization, the precepts of Christ had greatly molded the laws and customs and manners of the best people. ‘Distinguished sir,’ said I, ‘would you be willing for me to give one hour each day to teach these young noblemen concerning

Entertainments

the life and teachings of Jesus the Christ, so that they may be intelligent in the first principles of the great Western nations?’ ”

By this time the company in the Bancroft library had forgotten their worry about the winter's parties, and were eager to know more about the young Confucians of royal blood. “And did he consent?’ ” asked George, intent to learn more of her experience.

“After consulting with the other parents interested and laying the whole matter before the emperor,” said Mrs. Brown, “he returned to give his approval. Never has a mortal had greater joy than I then experienced. It was a privilege never before granted our missionaries to enter this rank. I carefully planned a series of lessons on the life of Jesus, from his wonderful advent at Bethlehem to his ascension from Bethany. We were in the midst of this entrancing study when Mr. Brown was ordered home for a year's rest ; for the debilitating climate and constant toil had told seriously upon our strength.”

She paused a moment and wiped her eyes, for her disappointment and her bereavement in her husband's death all came back as if it were but yesterday she parted from her attached Confucians never to resume her work—as if it were yesterday she had followed to the grave

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that noble companion, leading by the hand her two fatherless children. Then she continued :

“To-night it all came back to me, the charm of those hours with Christ ! I cannot go back to China. If I could, the relations of our missionaries with the government have greatly changed. My class of Confucians is scattered to various posts of honor. Some of them, I am told, are now secretaries of Chinese legations to various lands. But while you were here planning for your winter evenings for the months to come, I had a vision of this company of young people spending an evening or two each week around this table, studying character as revealed in the life and teachings of Jesus. I am sure if we could bring the real Christ before us as he walked and talked and taught upon earth, it would charm our minds as can no round of mere worldly pleasure. Will you four, since you have found no satisfactory plan for your social evenings, consent to make this the chief series of your winter’s entertainment ? ”

Mrs. Bancroft had come quietly into the library during the conversation. Amelia glanced at her mother. She was the youngest of the four. She had spent many Sunday afternoons reading “The Story of Jesus.” Now she caught her mother’s hand and said :

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“Wouldn’t you, mamma, like us to take that for our evenings rather than anything else in the world?”

Mrs. Bancroft smiled her assent, and watched with interest the face of her son. George Bancroft had the previous summer graduated from the high school, and was this year taking special studies, hoping to be able to enter Yale the next autumn.

Mr. Lyman Bancroft, the wealthy banker and leading citizen, was a moralist, who prided himself in his honest and honorable reputation, and for religion contented himself with his clean, cultured life. He attended church on Sunday and respected sacred things, but he did not study the Scriptures, nor did he speak of personal religion. George was beginning to emulate his father, though he greatly admired Mrs. Brown’s happy, cheerful faith amid all her toil and trials. When she spoke of Christ it was of such a tender friendship that he felt that her religion was not like that of most people he knew.

This evening her face shone with an unwonted charm as she talked of this study of the greatest life the world has known. George gave his consent to try it, a few evenings at least, under her guidance who had led the royal Confucians over this same road.

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Little did Mrs. Brown realize what secret springs of heart were to be touched, and what a crisis she had been divinely led to confront. But "Half-hours with the Christ" at length became more enchanting than any gay round of merely worldly pleasure. Let us follow these lessons, and the conflicts of these young friends thereby discovered. Their experience shows the same inner battle being now fought among the young people of almost every community, with too often no leader coming, in the hour of peril, to give conquest to the right.

CHAPTER III

HOUSE OF BREAD

THE arrangements were completed. The first evening came, and the four young people met in the Bancroft library. They were all bright, eager minds, but differing widely, as we shall see, in natural temperament. Lyman Bancroft's fine residence had a spacious library with a long center-table, which was richly supplied with choice literature. Mr. Bancroft had advised largely with his esteemed neighbor of wide reading, Mrs. Brown, in the selection of books for his shelves ; hence she knew them well.

A blackboard stood at one end of the room. Barton Brown was quite an expert in map drawing. His mother asked him to step to the board and give a mere outline of Palestine. He ran a crooked line down the center, ending in an oval irregular figure at the bottom. That was the Jordan emptying into the Dead Sea. To the left he drew another curve that represented the coast of the Mediterranean. With a rapid stroke or two more, there stood out a clear map of the Holy Land.

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Then Mrs. Brown began by saying that the life of Jesus clustered about four cities. She said it was very helpful to carry in the mind the location of these cities. "Will some one tell Barton where to locate Jerusalem?" It was a new thought to them.

"Well, open to your map of Palestine in your Bibles," she continued. "Notice that Jerusalem is on a line directly westward of the upper end of the Dead Sea. That one fact remembered will greatly aid you to carry in your mind a picture of the land. Jerusalem is twenty-four miles west of the mouth of the Jordan.

"Now, let us locate Bethlehem, the place where Jesus was born. Where is it from Jerusalem? Yes, south, six miles. Make a star at that point. Where is Nazareth? Yes, north of Jerusalem, and nearly opposite the lower end of the sea of Galilee. There is one more city—Capernaum, at the north end of this little lake through which the Jordan runs.

"Now you have fixed the location of what are called the four cities of Jesus—Bethlehem, where he was born; Nazareth, where he was brought up; Capernaum, where he resided during his ministry and from which he made frequent tours all through the land; and Jerusalem, where he died.

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“Here at Bethlehem Jesus was born. The world had been looking forward to his coming for a long time, as we since look backward. All time is now divided, throughout the civil-



ized world, ‘Before Christ,’ ‘After Christ.’ Such a personage demands our attention. Why has Jesus made such an impress upon the world that we date all our letters, record all our deeds, measure all time, from his birth? Have you thought that not an infidel in the

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land can hold his lot without mentioning in his title-deed the birth of Jesus Christ? He cannot write a letter to a friend without acknowledging the 'name above every name,' in the date ! It must be a wonderful character that thus controls this mighty stream of time so that we have no way of recording our dates but from his birth ! We cannot study these events of his life, unless we get clear views of his character and mission."

Here Mrs. Brown stepped to the board and wrote three references from the Bible. Then each of them took a Bible and turned to the places indicated, and then she asked them to fill out the three-fold mission of Christ from these passages.

"What does the first scripture say Christ has done? 'He revealed God.' So write that opposite the first. The second reference suggests a pure and holy life, a perfect model, so that Pilate could say, 'I find no fault in him.' So write in the second blank, 'He lived a perfect human life.' The last passage insists that we behold him as the atoning sacrifice for sin, so from that we may fill the last blank as to his mission."

Then there stood out on the blackboard the complete outline of the earthly mission of Jesus Christ :

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John I : 18 } John I : 27 } John I : 29 }	HE CAME TO	{ Reveal God. { Live a Perfect Life. { Redeem from Sin.
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“Now,” said the earnest teacher as all eyes were looking upon the diagram of Christ’s mission to earth, “you can never understand the life we are to study until you see this three-fold purpose of Christ’s life unfolded. This triple-lock key, and it alone, will open the treasures of his life. That most wonderful chapter of the Bible, the first of John’s Gospel, asks us to grasp this key with confident faith as we stand on the threshold.

“His life wrought a seamless robe of righteousness for our heavenly adornment. We are now to watch the process of the matchless weaving. Three shuttles fly back and forth ; one carries the white thread of a perfect human life ; another carries the blue of the skies, betokening his heavenly nature, his divine character ; the other shuttle bears the crimson thread of his atoning sacrifice whereby he redeems from the guilt of our sins. His life was woven throughout with the white and the blue and the crimson, representing his three-fold mission.

“He is the heavenly friend sent from above to reveal God unto us, our Emmanuel. He is the spotless man that restores to earth the

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broken mold of a true human life. Sin had robbed the world of a perfect model, but Christ restored it for our study. He presented himself to take the sinner's place and met all the demands of the broken law. Many did not, would not, understand him ; hence they rejected and crucified him."

Then George Bancroft recalled his first doubt. He had heard a neighbor talk of the mysteries of this subject. This neighbor, Mr. Blanchard, had cautiously said at their first conversation on the subject, that the doctrine that Jesus was both God and man was too mysterious for him to believe ; he thought that Jesus was a very good man but he could receive him as nothing more. This had dropped into the mind of this alert youth like a seed into the springtime soil. He had frequently met this neighbor since, and had watched for his skeptical remarks with eagerness. He was much bewildered. The mist had gathered into doubt, a dark, confusing doubt.

"Mrs. Brown," said he, "will you excuse me if I say that this subject has become such a dark mystery to me that I am bewildered whenever I think of it? It is so deep that I seem to be in a lake where I can never touch bottom ; or, if I stay on the surface, it is so wide that I never find any landing-place ; or

if I should ever land, I should be away off on the other side of our plain everyday life so that I should feel lonely. It makes me confused of late to think of it."

"Well, George," said the leader, "if you have such thoughts, our lesson has drifted to the right theme. Feel perfectly free to disclose all your difficulties. There is one question you ought to ask as you begin this study: He claimed to be the Son of God; did his life match this claim? As we compare his life with all others, does it rise so far above them that we must say 'The mystery of the life is consistent with the alleged mystery of the origin; his doctrine is consistent with the birth'? Please take this book and read a few sentences that I have marked, which show how others have been led in this study."

George was a fine reader, so he took the book with pleasure. There was a slight tremor in his voice, because of the first announcement of this inner conflict which he had kept secret to this moment. His reading gave a peculiar intensity to the words as he followed down the open page handed him:

"If there be no break in the rhythm between the sayings of the teacher and the revelation of the angel who foretold his wondrous birth, then this unity of mystery becomes itself

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an argument which compels certain conclusions. If the man spoke the language of earth with the accent of heaven, if he encouraged men by his common human nature to approach him, and then gave them assurance that the human enshrined the divine, then this would confirm his claim to have descended from heaven. Are these traces of the two natures in Christ's life and teachings?"

"Now, children," said Mrs. Brown as she turned to her son Barton and to Amelia Bancroft, "our thoughts have turned to a subject which, as George said a moment ago, is like a deep lake where one could not touch bottom; have we gone down out of your sight? or are we sailing away to the other side, many leagues from the place you were waiting to gather fruit with us? Have you lost interest?"

"Oh, not at all, Mrs. Brown," said Amelia. "I was reading only last Sunday with my mother the story of the angel song to the shepherds, 'Peace on earth, good will to men'; I thought while George was reading, 'Why, yes! his life was just like the angel song'; he was always giving peace and breathing forgiveness to men."

"And, Barton, are you with us?" said his mother, "or have you fallen overboard into George's deep lake?"

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“I am on board,” said Barton, with his usual vein for the humorous side, “in front with the captain, peering out to see if any icebergs are ahead !”

“Amelia’s thought of the angel song to the shepherds being found in the life of Christ,” said Mrs. Brown, “reminds me of my class of Confucians. When we came to this account of the angel choir singing beneath the stars, with the shepherds near Bethlehem for their listeners, they sat entranced. ‘Read it again,’ said Kwang Yu, the son of the chief official. The boys gathered close about the reader, and their lips moved and their eyes glistened. When we came the second time to the words, ‘Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people,’ Kwang Yu was greatly moved. He sat with bowed head, as if listening to catch the distant strain. When the last words were reached concerning the shepherds’ visit to find the Child of Bethlehem, ‘But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart,’ he said, ‘Teacher, was the mother wondering what the life would be, if angels came to tell the joy of his birth?’

“Then I said to this young Confucian, ‘That you may be the more eager to know of the teachings of the one who caused the angels to sing, “Peace on earth, good will to men,”’

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suppose we now turn to a few words that fell from the Master's lips as he sat once upon the mountain side and taught the people.' I opened to the Sermon on the Mount and read nearly through the fifth chapter of Matthew. When I came to the words, 'I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven,' so deep and intense was the impression produced upon the mind of one that he exclaimed, 'Oh, how beautiful, how divine! This is the truth!' and for many days he would often repeat, 'Love your enemies,' and then exclaim, 'How beautiful! Surely this is a teacher from heaven!'"

Then said Fannie Brown, "Why, Mother, how that did answer to the Confucians that question, 'Is the doctrine consistent with the birth?' His words exactly matched the angel song, 'Peace on earth, good will to men!'"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Brown, "they now went forward eagerly, desiring to see if everything matched in the life and teaching as did the angel song and the mountain sermon. And now, George, are you ready to go on to see if the man spoke the language of earth with the accent of heaven, asking all the way if the

mystery of his birth is matched by the mystery of his life? For you well know that we cannot dismiss anything as false because of its mystery; then we must stop eating, since we cannot fathom the process of digestion. We must, on that ground, refuse to drink at the spring; for who knows the secret siphons by which it rises to the hillside? The light has mysteries that baffle the greatest philosophers; shall we therefore banish the sun and grope in darkness?"

Just here Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft came to the library. "May we interrupt our student company a few moments?" said Mrs. Bancroft. "Bridget has brought from the kitchen a plate of hot doughnuts which we thought all might enjoy together."

"Certainly," said Mrs. Brown, "and we shall be very glad to have you join us, for we now begin a new chapter in our study."

CHAPTER IV

INNER CONFLICTS DISCOVERED

“MOTHER,” said George Bancroft, “you know my weakness for hot doughnuts when they come steaming from the kitchen ; yet I do declare, I have become so interested that even hot doughnuts can scarcely tempt me. I never told you about it for fear it might grieve you ; but Mr. Blanchard started a doubt in my mind, over at the store, a few weeks ago, about Christ being anything more than a good man. Since that I can scarcely hear prayer to Jesus without the thought, ‘Praying to a man !’ But I think this study is to settle that question forever. That doubt made me very unhappy. I dreamed lately that I started across a field, and before I knew it my feet were sinking in a marsh, and the more I struggled to get out the deeper I sank into the mire. When I woke I thought it was a picture of my condition ever since I began to doubt what you had taught me to believe.”

“Well, my son,” said Mrs. Bancroft with moistened eyes and tender voice, “you have shown a great change in your manner for sev-

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eral weeks. I have wondered what had put that strange foreboding and anxiety into the mind of one of your age. I trust your feet will soon stand on the solid rock of assurance."

"Now to this most interesting lesson," said Mrs. Brown after their refreshments, "and we shall be glad to have Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft remain with us, if they are so disposed." Mr. Bancroft readily consented ; for his son's words about becoming already entangled in a mesh of doubt from one remark of the noted skeptic of the town, made a deep impression on the father's mind. This neighbor he had known from his boyhood. He well remembered that Mr. Blanchard when a young man had read Paine's "Age of Reason," and that it had changed his whole manner of life. Ever since then he had been known as an unhappy doubter, standing apart from the quiet church-going community. Mr. Bancroft now thought to himself that it would be sad indeed to see George wander into the same sort of separation from friends and from happiness. He therefore remained to watch the effect of this study upon his son, rather than from present interest in the subject.

"We have already noticed," continued Mrs. Brown, "that the shepherds were guided

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by angel bands to welcome Jesus to Bethlehem. They represented the large class of toilers in the world. Tending flocks, or fishing for the markets, or working in the fields, or building houses, were the great multitudes. Jesus came to the weary, heavy-laden toilers, to give spiritual rest and lighten every burden. These shepherds represented the world's masses. Good tidings of great joy for all people, was the heavenly message to them. But shall these good tidings be worthy of the wise men of the earth? Will this same Christ bring through the carpenter's home a wisdom and wealth of intellect that shall draw men from the schools of philosophy? Next comes a prophecy that he should be the Christ of the learned as well as the unlearned. Fannie, will you read the story of the wise men coming to find the promised Saviour? Yes, it is Matthew that records it." Then Fannie read beginning: "Behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."

"Now, notice carefully," said the leader, "that these men found their guiding star confirmed by the clearer light of Scripture. Thus guided, they came to Jesus and worshiped

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him. Then they opened their treasures and presented unto him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. This is to me a vivid prophecy hid in the historic fact. This scene at his birth was to be matched by the scenes of his life, and his earthly life was the programme of the ages to follow. Jesus Christ has had the wise men coming to him ever since. As the star and the Scripture prophecy united to direct the wise men from the East, so science and the Bible yet mingle their light as men come to worship the Christ."

"Why, Mrs. Brown," said George, "I saw a statement in the newspaper last week that the developments of science in this century had overthrown a large part of the religious beliefs of the churches, and that the best minds were now dismissing as vague superstitions the things they commonly taught."

"I saw that too," said Barton Brown, "and I wondered if it meant that the things in the Bible were all going, and all these facts about Jesus too!"

"Well, if my boy of fourteen whose father loved these truths so well that he gave his life to go to China to tell them to those who had not heard of Jesus, is wondering whether our religion is all superstition, it is surely time that we begin this study in real earnest," and Mrs.

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Brown's face fairly shone with the confidence of divine guidance in entering upon this plan of study. "I feared, Barton," she continued, "that our conversation might be drifting away from your interest, and that you might be concluding that we were now landing far away on the other side of the lake, 'forty leagues to the east,' as George suggested.

"But if you too have gathered up these rash statements from the newspapers, we shall do well to follow these wise men and observe that their star led them to Jerusalem to inquire of the clearer prophecy. They lost the star until they stopped awhile to read their Bibles. Then when they started on, in the light of Scripture prophecy, behold, the star came again; for they were now safely guided upon the right road. So to-day the light of science stops far short of satisfaction to a seeking soul that will not take counsel from the Scriptures.

"Suppose I feel a sense of guilt within my soul and ask the stars, 'How may I find peace and pardon?' the stars are dumb, they answer not a word. I ask the rocks beneath my feet, and they are silent as the grave. Science may suggest my load of guilt, and start me out in quest of some Deliverer, but always stops short of abiding rest. But when I ask of the sacred

word where I may find the Prince of Peace, and then set out upon the way it points, there always comes clearer evidence, even from the shining stars, that I shall find him. When the wise men took advice from the prophecy found in Jerusalem, and then obeyed the direction by climbing the hills toward Bethlehem, the star returned with new clearness. Had these men refused to follow the clearer light of prophecy, and returned to their old home satisfied with their former star-gazing, they would have done what some are doing to-day, who do not test the Bible by pursuing the search along the Bethlehem road. There are wise men still, however, who find science and the Bible in perfect harmony, as these men of old were led to joyful worship by the guidance of star and prophecy."

Mrs. Brown's words gathered new inspiration and pathos since her own son, as well as George Bancroft, had revealed an open ear and ready mind to questions of doubt. It was the first intimation she had received that either of them knew this inner conflict of soul.

She had learned enough this evening to see that it was well to pause with the worshipping wise men longer than she had intended. She had not before realized that these two bright

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boys, reading the daily papers that so frequently report with enticing head-lines the lectures of noted skeptics, were compelled to think along these lines. She did not now realize how far their busy thoughts had gone. But a new revelation dawned upon her mind. She saw that we are living in a new age. She caught a vision of the great company of American young people pushing through high schools and colleges with minds quickened to seize new thoughts, and taught to glorify our advancing age. As never before she saw their religious peril. She thought of her class of royal youth beyond the sea, who had been taught that Confucius was the world's greatest teacher, and then carefully schooled from childhood in his learned maxims. How difficult to reach beyond that prejudice! Are American youth, before they know the Christ, being schooled against him?

She arose and walked the room a moment, until her mind calmed from these rising thoughts. Then she told them that a new vision had dawned upon her. "I believe," said she, "I have just awakened to the reality of things. At first I was inclined to blame my boys for their slumbering thoughts of doubt. Now I catch a vision of our new age. Boys are now compelled to grapple with skept-

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tical thought in early youth. It flies in the air. Satan is after them young; we must steal a march on his Satanic Majesty! We must journey this Bethlehem road with the wise men; we must find this 'House of Bread' before their appetite is dulled with chaff. George, do you believe that wise men still worship the Christ?"

"That is the very question that I want answered," said George, "before I can take real interest. It troubles me to read so often that the distinguished scientists have found that religious beliefs cannot endure the light of the nineteenth century."

"Mother," said Barton, "I read a few days ago only that a new religion called by some word meaning 'the wisdom of God,' had arisen, and was likely to eclipse Christianity. I wish we could know that really wise men to-day receive Christ and worship him just like these men that came to Bethlehem."

"Then shall we all vote," said Mrs. Brown, "to give a lesson to wise men worshipping Christ in our age as devoutly as the men of old?"

This was the united conclusion. Then said Mrs. Brown, "It is now half-past nine; and I suspect that the wise men stopped over night at Jerusalem and took a good refreshing sleep

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before they went the rest of the way. Whether they did or not, I am quite sure that wise students like these, who must be in school tomorrow, should now quiet the brain for retiring."

"I must thank you, Mrs. Brown," said Mr. Bancroft, "for this pleasant hour. I am inclined to beg the privilege of joining the children in your future lessons. In my busy life, I confess, I do not give enough attention to this subject. I have always been what might be called a believer in the truths of the Bible; yet, as Barton has said, I am often surprised at statements in the papers. I see by this lesson that I need to take my place with the children, and read these old truths in the light of to-day." They all expressed their delight at the thought of Mr. Bancroft studying with them.

"Certainly," said Mrs. Brown, "since it pleases the rest of our group, I must not object; though I had only thought of our four young people, and of trying to bring the Christ of the Gospels so near that we all might know him as a more intimate friend. Recently I received a letter from an old acquaintance of my husband that greatly impressed me. In it was this: 'It has always seemed to us that if we could have been close to

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Christ during his life in the body upon earth, we would have caught his spirit and become so changed by it that to live as he lived and taught, would have become the engrossing thought and purpose of our lives. We believe that to know Christ is to love him, to worship him, to will to be like him continually. It was this glorious seeing of Christ that made the disciples what they became. Many did not receive Christ because they did not behold his glory ; but how it changed those who did ! We live in a better age in some ways, but to most of us Christ seems a long way off.'

"These words," said Mrs. Brown, "made me feel that we do not walk and talk with Jesus enough, as he lived that earthly life among the people. But now you have welcomed the coming, you must speed the parting guest, as says the proverb. Good-night."

CHAPTER V

WISE MEN WORSHIP

WE shall not follow into all the thoughts of Lyman Bancroft, the wealthy banker, during the days which came before the next lesson, nor will we wait to witness the full inner conflict of his son George, following the disclosure of his disturbed faith. It is perhaps enough to say that both were eager for a second study. This model citizen, everywhere esteemed for his pure morals and devotion to public good, was no little disturbed by the thought that truly wise men do come to the Christ and openly acknowledge him. His conscience seemed to have a new tongue now, which kept ever repeating, "The wise men worshiped him. The wise men worshiped him." Then he thought to himself how he had come to despise the citizen who stands off one side and looks on "patronizingly," when a good cause needs his open and earnest espousal. He wondered if that was not the way in which he had been treating the Christ. Thus there came a sense of humiliation never felt before. The march of the wise men to wor-

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ship and witness at Bethlehem touched his heart with new meaning.

George had again in the meantime met Mr. Blanchard. A sort of attraction had sprung up between the two. This man observed how eagerly the youth drank in his words about Christ and Socrates both dying alike as deluded reformers, and that he would as soon worship the one as the other. There was a peculiarly warm grasp of the hand given whenever he met George that held and charmed the earnest boy. Still he felt a strong drawing toward the coming lesson, "Do wise men still worship Jesus?"

To Mrs. Brown the lessons had taken a very unexpected turn. She was surprised that the rich banker, making no profession of religion, had decided to attend her lessons. It was a still greater surprise to learn that George was already caught in the web of doubt from which it was not easy to escape. But more amazing than all else was the fact that her own son of fourteen was alert to subtle phases of skepticism that would question the very foundations of her own faith.

She said to Barton before going to the class that she feared the lesson which George craved concerning the wise men of to-day might not interest him. But Barton insisted that if really

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wise men did now receive Christ, just as the wise men who came to Bethlehem, he wanted to know it.

The hour came. All were promptly at the table in the Bancroft library. They remembered well the theme from the previous evening, that the wise men being led to Bethlehem by two guides, the star and the Scriptures, were a prophecy that other wise men would ever follow in their footsteps. Said Mrs. Brown pleasantly :

“Mr. Bancroft, your coming to-night reminds me of that interesting scene in the early ministry of Christ when the rich ruler of the Jews came by night to Jesus. I wish it might be as profitable to you as it was to Nicodemus ; for one of Christ’s best friends was made by that visit. The wise men from the East were prophetic of Nicodemus’ coming. Was Nicodemus also a prophecy of to-night ? ”

“Perhaps I ought,” said Mr. Bancroft, “to do as did Nicodemus, come alone, instead of disturbing the children.”

But Amelia said, “Oh, papa, how nice that we can all be together !” And Fannie and Barton were equally proud to have this distinguished citizen journeying with them.

“We are going to call witnesses from our own century and modern times to-night, to

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see whether wise men still find the stars of heaven and the Scriptures going hand in hand to lead them to worship Jesus. Seeing that unabridged dictionary standing upon the tripod with open page saying, 'I am ready to speak,' I think we will call its author, Noah Webster, to the stand. It is true he was not strictly a scientist, yet a very wise and influential man ; was he not, Mr. Bancroft? "

"Indeed he was," said the banker ; "he was the special friend of George Washington and of Alexander Hamilton, and was one of the most influential advisers in the adoption of the Constitution of the United States. But I was not aware that he gave any decided testimony on this subject. If Noah Webster is to witness, his voice should have weight."

"George," said Mrs. Brown, "will you turn to the preliminary matter and read on page eleven a paragraph which I have marked? "

With much surprise that he was sent to the dictionary to find prophecy fulfilled, he read aloud the account of Webster's conversion. Mr. Bancroft was deeply moved. He had often said that this generation did not know enough about what this distinguished scholar had done in bringing thinking men to the support of Washington and the Constitution.

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“Here is another Nicodemus coming to Christ,” said Mrs. Brown. “I want all to notice how this learned man of purest morals, but somewhat skeptical for twenty years of his life, now at the age of forty goes into his study and alone with his Bible and his God examines carefully the testimony. Soon he finds his objections removed, and to use his own language to a friend afterward, he felt constrained to cast himself down before God, confess his sins, and implore pardon through the merits of the Redeemer. Now observe this wise man going back to his family, calling them together, telling them that until now he had neglected the thing most important. Then with deep emotion he reads the Scriptures and leads them in prayer. Soon by the side of his own children he confesses Christ in the church.”

“Why, mamma,” said Barton, “I shall never look into the dictionary again without thinking that this book was made by one of the wise men who came to Jesus !”

“At least, my son,” said his mother, “I hope when you read, as you did last week, that only the simple-minded and unlearned worship our Saviour, you will remember that Noah Webster, after the most careful search, yet with all his learning, cast himself down

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upon his face and implored pardon through the name of Jesus for so long neglecting to serve him as his Lord."

"This seems to me even more wonderful," said Mr. Bancroft, "than the worship of the wise men of old."

"He is a worthy leader of the company that journeys toward the Christ of Bethlehem in this nineteenth century," said Mrs. Brown, as she watched the faces of the four young people who were sent daily to Webster in all their school work.

Fannie Brown had the past week been reading "Ben Hur," by General Lew Wallace. The scene of the three wise men, as they first met east of the Jordan, was fresh in her mind. "Mr. Webster," said Fannie, "did much as the Grecian wise man in 'Ben Hur'!"

"How was that, Fannie? I do not exactly recall it," said her mother.

So she repeated as accurately as she could: "As they rested their camels, preparing to journey together in search of the Christ, each one told of his coming. Said the Grecian: 'My people were given wholly to study, and from them I derived the same passion. It happens that two of our greatest philosophers teach, one the doctrine of an Immortal Soul; the other the doctrine of One God, infinitely

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just. The schools were disputing about a multitude of subjects, but I pushed them all aside but these two, God and Immortality, as alone worth the labor of solution. And while I mused a shipwrecked Jew swam ashore. I received and took care of him. He was learned in the history and laws of his people. He taught me that the God of my prayers did exist. Nay, more ; he said the prophets who in the ages which followed the first revelation walked and talked with God, declared he would come again. He told me further that the second coming was at hand—was looked for momentarily in Jerusalem. When the Jew was gone I was alone, and I chastened my soul with a new prayer, that I might see the King when he was come, and worship him. One night I sat musing and praying in turn ; and behold I saw a star suddenly arise in the darkness over the sea ! And I heard a voice saying, “Thy faith hath conquered ; with two others thou shalt see him that is promised, and be a witness for him !” In the morning I took shipping for Antioch ; there I purchased this camel and am come hither. With thought only of God and Eternity, I come to worship the King at his coming.’”

As Fannie recited these burning words her spirit caught a new inspiration. She had been

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much under the influence of George Bancroft ; for a year past the rich banker's son had been her ideal of manly thought. There were some confidences between them that even their watchful parents did not know. George trusted Fannie with some inner doubts which he had whispered to no other. He had told her of his high ambition of great scholarship, when he should know what was mere superstition and what was true learning. It was Fannie's growing hope that she might follow up the same shining heights and always be able to share this confidence, whatever pinnacle of wisdom and fame he might reach.

Hence, for a few months past her early Christian trust had become somewhat obscured. Her mother had noticed a cool reserve in their hours of devotion, quite unlike her earlier happy experience. But this evening as Fannie recited the story of this Grecian's faith, as he pushed aside all great philosophies but the truths of God and immortality, and started on the long journey to see and worship the Christ, until across sea and land he is nearing Bethlehem, she laid her hand in that of her mother at her side and looked into her face with the same sweet joy and trust as at her conversion three years before.

George sat opposite and saw the enkindling

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rapture in her face which he could not fully understand. But Fannie and her mother were one again in spirit ; they knew the presence of the risen Christ. So after a pause George, somewhat embarrassed, asked : “ But, Mrs. Brown, are there real scientists who worship Christ and reverence the Bible as did Noah Webster? ”

“ Yes, George, we must not forget that we meet to study that very question this evening. But now that Fannie has called our attention to ‘ Ben Hur,’ it suggests the way in which that book originated. The author tells us that he himself was troubled with doubts, and promised a distinguished skeptic to make careful examination ; that he began the study an unbeliever, and ended an assured Christian. His book was a golden gift that he laid at the feet of the Christ of Bethlehem. It is scented with the myrrh and sweet incense of the rich treasures of the wise men of old.”

“ Why,” said Amelia, “ it seems as if the wise men of the Bible lived now and were coming here ! ”

“ You would better look out the window,” said Barton with a twinkle in his eye, “ and see whether the camels are in sight.”

“ Well,” said Mrs. Brown, “ I am glad to see this lesson has not taken us out of sight of

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the children. I feared we might have drifted beyond their interest. But if they are looking down the street to see the white dromedaries approaching, laden with the royal treasures for our King, surely these are living pictures. But George is waiting to see if a nineteenth century scientist is in the procession. Is Bethlehem real to them, or only a superstition?"

Just here Bridget stepped in with hot chocolate, and Mrs. Bancroft asked if all might not pause a few moments for refreshments. "You have given me," said George, "some very unexpected names in literature which I was not prepared to hear, men as eminent in religion as in letters. So I am eager to press on."

CHAPTER VI

OTHER WISE MEN

“**L**ET Sir John Herschel cross the ocean to bear witness here to-night,” said Mrs. Brown, as she opened a volume giving the testimony of eminent scientists. “It is not well,” she said, to multiply names. Let rather the distinct, positive statements of a few eminent and best-known scholars be fastened upon the memory. The discoveries of Sir John Herschel were very important, and his well-known honesty of purpose and accuracy of training give great weight to these words: ‘All human discoveries seem to be made only for the purpose of confirming more and more strongly the truths contained in the sacred Scriptures.’ This distinguished man seems to utter his surprise at the overwhelming testimony of the new truths found in the natural world confirming the Scriptures. It is just as we might expect from the opening testimony of John’s Gospel to Christ: ‘All things were made by him.’ Surely his works will confirm his words.”

Then Mrs. Brown handed George the book,

saying, "I want your eyes to follow these lines from the renowned Professor Dana, of Yale. I know, George, that you have an ambition to be at Yale in another year. Perhaps you have wondered whether her most distinguished scholars still receive the Bible into reverent hands and worship under those old elms as devoutly as did Noah Webster at the beginning of the century. So please read this paragraph."

George was eager to see this testimony from the well-known scientist, and so read with intense interest through these concluding words : " 'The grand old book still stands ; and this old earth the more its leaves are turned over and pondered, the more it will sustain and illustrate the sacred word.' "

Said Mrs. Brown : "Science has made great advance in the past two hundred years ; but from Sir Isaac Newton, who led the way into the newer heavens that modern science has revealed, to the very latest revelations of the last star that has been discovered, honest men have found nothing to quench the light of the Bible and the most devout Christian faith. Said Newton, 'I account the Scriptures of God the most profound philosophy' ; and in his last years, with all his honors as a scientist, he laid aside his telescope to write as his last book a commentary on Revelation.' "

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But George's doubts were very reluctant to quit the field. Mr. Blanchard had recently advised him to read Shakespeare, saying that if he wanted "inspiration," he would find it there instead of in old Jewish legends. So through this latest suggestion the battle was renewed. Rather than acknowledge his satisfaction, he recalled the skeptic's statement that "Many merely human writings seem to show greater evidence of inspiration than the Bible." So George was prompted to say :

"Do not Shakespeare's writings show as deep thought and profound wisdom as the Bible? And if so, would not that show that all good books are inspired just alike?"

Mrs. Brown was silent for a moment, because of her surprise at his quoting this argument so common among confirmed skeptics; hence George felt a little pride at his own position. Mrs. Brown was only feeling a deep pity for his poison of soul, and was thinking of her own children's being so much under his influence. She at once recalled having seen an extract from Shakespeare's will. Her face lighted with her confident faith as she said,

"George, did you ever see a copy of William Shakespeare's will?"

"No, ma'am," said George; "but what has that to do with this question?"

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“Then please hand me the encyclopædia from the shelf back of you.” He reached for the proper volume and she read these closing words from his last will : “ ‘ I commend my soul into the hands of God my Creator, hoping and assuredly believing through the only merits of Jesus my Saviour to be made partaker of life everlasting.’ ”

George listened with complete surprise. Soon he said, “He must have been a very devout Christian to put that in his will.”

“Surely,” replied Mrs. Brown ; “and it is said that the Bible molded his language and furnished his strongest delineations of character. He is a very important witness. He is one of the acknowledged wise men who brought all his great treasures of mind to Christ and fell down and worshiped him.” Thus, George, Shakespeare himself acknowledges that all his spiritual light is drawn from the Scriptures. His teacher, he assures us, was Christ, who alone came from the bosom of the Father—the Christ who became incarnate in the word. How forcibly he teaches us that all safe books upon religious life shine with borrowed light ! They are clocks set by the sun.”

The evening had quickly gone. The lesson had done a work of great importance to clear their minds of prejudices that prevented their

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looking toward the Christ with clear vision. Mr. Bancroft said : “ I thank you, Mrs. Brown, for giving our children these important facts. If I could have known them when I was young it would have changed my whole life. Yet here they are in my library and I never knew it ! A Christian surely need not be ashamed of his belief if he is standing beside Newton and Herschel and Dana and Webster and Shakespeare ! ”

“ I should not be ashamed to stand by Jesus alone,” said Fannie ; “ but it is pleasant to feel that he has had so many wise men coming to worship him.”

A few days ago Fannie could not have spoken so confidently. George looked at her with some surprise, for he was conscious that she too had been bewildered, and her former condition of mind had seemed to bring her nearer to his own thought and sentiment. This shining faith and happy testimony seemed now to put a barrier between them ; hence his expression became sad and disturbed. Mrs. Brown did not understand the reason of his disappointed look, so she thought it a favorable time to fix this lesson, and said :

“ George, I am deeply anxious to remove from your mind the mistaken notion that Jesus has not devout worshipers among the

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wisest men of the age. These men and many others have gone down into the earth, and up into the heavens, and out into all the deepest labyrinths of human thought, and yet have found nothing inconsistent with their most ardent devotion to our Saviour. You admire the marvelous sagacity and rugged statesmanship of Mr. Gladstone. Do you not know that he has written an earnest work entitled, 'The Impregnable Rock of the Sacred Scriptures'? Did you not read recently the statement of a city missionary in London, that he found an old man sick and alone in a dingy garret, whose employment had been to sweep the street-crossings near the Houses of Parliament? When he asked the sick man if no one had been in to see him, he replied, 'Mr. Gladstone came and read the Bible and kneeled down and prayed with me!' O George, are you unwilling to be in company with such men as Mr. Gladstone, and to turn your steps to follow the wise men toward Bethlehem to find the Christ? "

There was a pathos in her voice that George had not before observed, and he made little reply. The leader felt that it was well to close the evening lesson here, that the facts which the young man had been eager to discover might receive more careful thought.

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When Mrs. Brown and her children had gone, George went immediately to his room. He seemed to find the props that had sustained his doubts dropping away. He had been deeply interested to know if truly the wisest men did now follow Christ, but it had been from a mere sense of ambitious pride. Such a motive did not have strength to move him toward the Christ of Bethlehem, bearing all his best gifts to cast at his feet. But honest meditation, bereft of foolish prejudices, was much to have gained.

Mr. Bancroft tarried in the library when all his family had retired. He was surprised to find himself so suddenly aroused to deep religious reflection. The whole question of studying the life of Christ, as a matter of history in some dim past, had taken such an unexpected turn to the living present, that his own town seemed a Bethlehem, and he felt almost inclined to look out into the street, as the children had suggested, to see if there were not some unusual stir; and the old question, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him," seemed an audible voice from a great procession of wise men coming out of the centuries. The great mountains of human merit upon which he had

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been so long standing, gathered from his honorable dealing and upright citizenship, all wasted away. There was now only one thing of satisfaction to an immortal soul, and that was to know the Christ who came to Bethlehem.

As he sat alone in the library, his eye caught sight of a picture on the wall. It was faith clinging to the cross with a serene hope, while the billows rolled below. That cross had never seemed needed in his past reflections. Its very sight had often stirred his main objection to Christian truths ; to his sense of moral purity and pride, why should that cross be presented ? Then there came the words of Noah Webster, a man of the most spotless morals in the sight of men, when in his library alone, " he felt constrained to cast himself down before God, confess his sins, and implore pardon through the merits of the Redeemer." Meditation had begun its work, and history and science were lifting the Christ of Scripture to new interest. There came a deep yearning in Mr. Bancroft's heart ; it was to know more of the Christ the wise men sought and worshiped. He thought, how strange it was that the study was all arranged for him to sit down like a little child and be taught concerning his life !

CHAPTER VII

PRESERVING CARE

DURING the next few days Mrs. Brown's thoughts were busy about her own son. Barton, as we have said, was of a mature mind and affectionate disposition, but of a highly wrought nervous temperament and strong will. He had a keen taste for reading and his active mind was alert to every form of thought. His mother was surprised almost daily to hear him speak of things in the papers that had escaped her attention, or were passed over as best not to be observed. There were times when his will was so strong and his temper so hot that he reminded her of an engine with a full head of steam, bounding away over the track with no one aboard capable of managing its mighty force. Mrs. Brown well knew the danger to such a boy unless his powers are brought under wise control. She wished therefore to bring much out of the study of the youthful Christ. Her next lessons were arranged with much thought and prayer.

When they came together in the Bancroft library she announced as the theme, "The

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preserving care over the infant Jesus." She began :

"The sweetest lesson of our life is here unfolded from the divine protection over the Christ. It is again prophecy in history. Christ was to reveal the great facts of every true human life. The life of trust is the only happy life. Our Heavenly Father's gracious care of his own is the first lesson we need to learn. Wise men come to worship, but wicked Herod at the same time is plotting destruction. It is always so. Forces of evil as well as of good are about us. Only a secure trust in our Father's care can give a restful soul amid the perils of evil.

"Joseph and Mary would seem to be preparing to remain in Bethlehem. But God warns of danger, and directs their flight to Egypt. Now how shall this humble carpenter leave his bench and make such a journey?"

They took their Bibles and read the account. One pointed out upon the map the way to the south, and then the lonely journey across the desert. They pictured their coming into that land to dwell in seclusion. It was asked if they would not suffer from want, or be suspected of evil design?

"Now," said Mrs. Brown, "is there any intimation that they have been carefully pro-

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vided against these emergencies? Has any unexpected supply dropped into their hands?"

Then for the first time the others saw a hidden meaning in the gold of the wise men. "Do you think these men brought that gold for this journey?" said Amelia in surprise.

"They no doubt brought it as the expression of their heart devotion," said Mrs. Brown; "but do you not suppose they gave just as you would make a gift to a friend to-day, to be used as would most add to the comfort of that friend? It was to me a most beautiful providence for the needs of the hour. Must they make speedy flight for their safety? The gold had been put in their hands for the emergency."

"But would they not be suspected," said George, "and thus in danger by remaining in hiding in Egypt? It does not seem that it was a very honorable position in which to be thrust."

"It is not what we seem," said Mrs. Brown, "but what we are, George, that is to be the chief thought. The world has this very common and dangerous motto, 'To seem is indispensable; to be is a matter of indifference.' If they carried an honest purpose, and went at the divine command, perhaps the rest would take care of itself. But I think I see a mar-

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velous provision to lift them above suspicion, and provide for a most honorable abode in Egypt. Did the wise men bring nothing but golden treasure as their gift?"

"Yes, they brought frankincense and myrrh," said Fannie; "but could these gifts help them?"

"Think a moment; what was the chief merchandise from the far East to Egypt in those days?" replied the mother. "Yes, you are right; myrrh and other sweet spices found valuable market for Egyptian embalming and priestly service. The Eastern venders not only found ready sale for these treasures, but were themselves welcome and honored visitors. This family could carry considerable value in a very small package. Thus they would be welcomed and protected as honored guests. It was all in accordance with the promise, 'I will deliver him, and honor him.' In this marvelous care of Christ that he might fulfill his mission, was pledge and prophecy of Providence over every trusting disciple. Every step in the life of Jesus is filled with lessons of faith for us."

Mr. Bancroft had never felt so deeply impressed as now with the great mission of Christ. He had supposed all his life that the only mission of Jesus was to die on the cross, while

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he had not even seen the spiritual side of Christ's dying ! There came now a new view of that wonderful life. He saw importance in union with Christ so as to enter into the secret sonship with the Saviour, as never before. It lifted the whole plan of the gospel into such beauty and blessing to all classes and conditions of men, as had never dawned upon him till this moment. But he was so accustomed to keep silent about his religious thoughts that he only manifested his interest by his rapt attention.

Mrs. Brown now turned their attention to the great persecutor, Herod, who had been foiled in his strategy to destroy Jesus. She asked them if they supposed that Herod had always been such a monster of cruelty as he appeared now in sending his officers to slay these innocent children ? "It is true," she said, "this is a little thing for him, when we remember that he had before murdered his mother, his noble wife, Mariamne, and her two sons. The study of Herod the Great is full of important lessons. He grew to be this monster of wickedness from a youth of great promise. He was the result of uncontrolled jealousy."

Then Mrs. Brown asked Barton to read this description of the man :

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“Herod was a man of fine physical powers, rare force of intellect and will, keen insight, calm presence of mind in the midst of difficulties, and daring courage. The combination of these qualities fitted him to be a general and a ruler. Nor did he lack generosity and noble magnanimity. But a bad environment and a passionate nature turned him into a heartless, despotic, and suspicious tyrant.”

Then they took up Herod the Great for a study. It was deeply impressed on them how this youth must have been one of great promise. His talent was of fine order. His taste in architecture excelled all others of that age. Under him rose the new city of Cæsarea ; the old city of Samaria was rebuilt in great splendor. Herod built a royal palace on Mount Zion, rebuilt the temple, and at Jericho adorned another palace for himself, where he died in remorse and wretchedness after a reign of thirty-seven years, and in the very year of Christ's birth.

When they had a full view of Herod's character Mrs. Brown went on to say : “I am touched with sadness when I consider this man. He had the talent of Paul. They probably had much the same ambition, in the beginning of life. One was converted, and all his powers of mind and heart were purified

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and all his aims ennobled ; so he became a rich blessing to many nations. The other allowed a spirit of jealousy to grow into hate and revenge, and he is remembered as a monster of cruelty. Do you see any wonderful lesson to the world in the fact that Herod, called the King of the Jews, such a heartless tyrant, should have died of a most loathsome disease while plotting death to his own friends, that such a king should have died the year that Jesus was born ? ”

It was Fannie, whose heart was now aglow with her new love for Christ, who could see her mother's lesson, so she said : “ Why, Jesus was born to be the true King of the Jews ; and would it not mean that Christ was going to bring a reign of love instead of hate, peace instead of cruelty, purity instead of loathsome disease ? ”

“ Yes,” said Mrs. Brown, “ it seems to me that it was one of history's great object-lessons. A voice seemed to say, Let cruel, bloodthirsty Herod die, for there is born this year unto you Christ the Prince of Peace ! He is come to relieve the world of that old sinful monarch, Selfishness, and to place on the throne of every heart Love, with her scepter of glory to God and good will to men. It was in the eternal fitness of things that the king who

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had become a vile monster should die in rottenness and disgrace, the very year that Jesus was born heralded of angels as Christ the Lord."

Then Mrs. Brown's thoughts reverted to her class of Confucians when they became so entranced with this character of Jesus as he proclaimed, "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you." So she said that she hoped this contrast between Herod and Christ would have the same effect upon her "royal Americans" that it had had upon her class of "royal officials" beyond the ocean.

Just at this time the papers were full of accounts of "The World's Parliament of Religions" in session at Chicago in connection with the Columbian Exposition, for these "Half-hours with the Christ" began the same autumn. George Bancroft's mind was in condition to watch eagerly for whatever might seem new in religious thought. He had read the account of the opening of this marvelous convention, and noticed that the secretary of the Chinese legation in Washington had spoken at the Parliament of Religions.

"What was the name of the leading Confucian in your class," said George, "which you mentioned to us in our first lesson?"

"Kwang Yu was the eldest, and the bright-

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est mind," said Mrs. Brown. "But why do you ask, George?"

"I was reading to-day," he replied, "that the secretary of the Chinese legation to the United States was present at the opening of the Parliament of Religions and delivered a brief address. His name sounded much the same as that of your leading Confucian." Then George turned to the paper and read the name as the Honorable Pung Kwang Yu. "I was wondering," continued George, "whether the Pung might not be some official title attached, and this distinguished gentleman really be your old friend, since you said that you had learned that some of your class had been appointed to these secretaryships."

"I thank you for calling my attention to this fact," said Mrs. Brown. "It is indeed quite possible that you are right in your surmise. The Pung as prefix might be attached as a title of honor. I must try to find out by some means whether this representative of China is my old pupil."

Then they took a review of the leading thoughts of the evening lesson, the teacher asking what had impressed each one. Mr. Bancroft said in conclusion that he felt that a very important lesson to the boys was this: The wreck which Herod made of great talent

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and opportunity by not governing his jealous spirit, and by failing to cultivate the better side of his nature. "The same thing," said he, "ruins many of noble talent to-day. Every boy passes through a crisis from fourteen to seventeen ; if he fails to school his temper and passions then, he is in danger of making a wreck of his opportunity. This lesson may be of great importance to our sons, Mrs. Brown."

"It should draw them," said Mrs. Brown, "to a love of the Christlike spirit, surely. To mold character, as in molding clay, we need a perfect model. There is but one such. We are to hasten on in our study to see character at its best. 'When Saul saw Christ, he became Paul,' is a sentence that has stirred my heart lately. Our dear boys, as we all, Mr. Bancroft, should mold their characters after the only perfect model. But our next lesson will put this thought clearly before us in the first recorded words that fell from Christ's lips."

CHAPTER VIII

PURPOSE IN LIFE

GEORGE BANCROFT had reached a very important decision. He had determined to make an honest investigation. He was conscious of having been under the influence of Mr. Blanchard. He felt that an ignorant prejudice had for a time shut out the light from his mind. He saw how easily one drifted into such a condition that he could not receive the truth, and he felt now sincere pity for their neighbor who had recently held such a power over him. He had already seen some of Mr. Blanchard's strong arguments against the Christian faith melt away under his own investigation in his father's library. He recalled how unhappy those doubts had made him, and he felt a peculiar gratefulness for the few facts that had come into full assurance. So he said to himself, "I will make an honest investigation."

When he reached this point he felt a great barrier removed. Since the evening that Fannie Brown had gone home with shining face clinging close to her mother's arm, she had seemed so independent of all his doubting sug-

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gestions that George could not approach her with his old confidence. But after the latest lesson he retired to his room with the feeling that he had been very much like old jealous Herod, jealous because Jesus had come to the throne of her heart. So the thought came to him, "If I had gone on in my blind prejudice, I should have soon been ready like Herod to attempt to destroy Christ out of my way. Indeed I had already tried to shoot my arrows of doubt within that heart."

When he next met Mr. Blanchard it was in an independence of mind he had not felt for many weeks.

"How do you get on with Shakespeare?" inquired the skeptic; "don't you think it better inspiration than the Bible?"

"I have been interested," said George, "in noticing the many places where his thoughts seem drawn direct from the Scriptures, and so I have been examining the encyclopædias, and I find he was a great lover of the Bible, reading it so devoutly that his own language was molded by it. And I found that in his will he committed his soul to God, trusting in the merits of the Christ of the Scriptures. This has given me, Mr. Blanchard, new faith in the Bible, if it has helped to make Shakespeare what he was."

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Mr. Blanchard was completely surprised at the change in George's mind. "I have never seen such statements concerning Shakespeare," he replied; "I think there must be some mistake about it."

"I thought you did not know about it," said George. "I wish you would come in, this afternoon, to our library; I should like to show you these facts."

Mr. Blanchard said that some day when he had time he would talk further with him.

They all came together at the evening lesson with increasing interest. They had read carefully all the Scripture concerning the flight to Egypt, and felt a peculiar interest in Joseph and Mary with the child Jesus, waiting in the same safety and honor in the strange country as if they had been wealthy merchants, because the wise men had presented them with the precious gifts that made them welcome visitors. God's overruling care of those who follow his bidding seemed more assured and precious than ever before, as they followed the holy family back to their old home in Nazareth led by divine guidance.

All were drawn nearer to each other as they came nearer to Christ in the Gospels. One of the number read the visit of Jesus to the temple at twelve years of age (Luke 2 : 40-52).

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“These verses,” said Mrs. Brown, “contain all that is said in the Bible concerning the youth of Jesus. Not a word that he uttered until he was thirty years of age is recorded, except this one sentence to his mother, ‘How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?’ All that wonderful life of Jesus at Nazareth to the very beginning of his ministry is veiled in these words from his own lips, and the simple statements of Luke that ‘The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom : and the grace of God was upon him.’ ‘And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.’ Curiosity has invented much concerning Christ’s doings and sayings during his childhood and youth. In the early centuries many books were written, filling up this time with many noted miracles performed by Jesus. But the very reading of these books as compared with the New Testament shows that they are spurious statements which imagination has attempted to supply. But why have all these years been passed over in silence in the Bible account of that wonderful life ? ”

To an ambitious youth who has been stirred by the noise of the world, it seems impossible for a great life to dwell so long in retirement.

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Barton Brown had many dreams of rushing early into some public arena and astonishing the community. He was amazed at this long obscurity in a model life. It seemed utterly opposed to all his hopes and aspirations. His eyebrows knit and his face showed a rising spirit of protest. His mother read his thoughts and had anticipated his disappointment. She desired to mass all their forces of thought at this point.

“There are two things,” said Mrs. Brown, “brought side by side here in the life of Jesus that are of greatest importance. There was a clearly grasped purpose of life seen in Christ’s first recorded words, ‘I must be about my Father’s business,’ and yet his life is hid in obscurity until he is thirty years of age. In these two things he is the most desirable model for all the world. Many a youth is nothing more than a chip drifting down-stream, ready to drop into any whirlpool of froth and filth. The gospel lifts the curtain of Christ’s youth just long enough for us to see the clear, noble resolve that filled all his mind at the age of twelve. He steps aside from his own mother, even, for a single day, that the whole world might see that it was his own distinct recognition of God as his Father, and a high mission voluntarily chosen which stirred his own soul. Do

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my children all notice this great first utterance of Jesus that is given for our study?" Mrs. Brown drew every eye to her searching gaze. She believed that it had been divinely ordered that this one thing should stand alone revealed in all the youthful life of Jesus ; that his whole youth was darkened, except at one point, and then the light turned upon that great noble purpose.

"Can you not all see," said Mrs. Brown, "that if all the daily routine of his youthful days had been revealed, this one all-important element might have been left in obscurity? So the Gospels have obscured everything else that this might attract our attention. Do you see how the curtain lifted upon Jesus at the age of twelve, that its early importance might be impressed? How clearly it says, Children, don't drift ; don't be a chip ; awake to a noble life ; be in haste about it !

"George, you had your photograph taken last June, on the very day you graduated from the high school. It was the only picture you had taken all last year. When you are gone from home that picture will mean more than if it had been taken on any other day. The Bible has seen fit to give us but one portrait of Jesus during all his youth. What day was it best to choose, do you think? I am sure it

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has been chosen in divine wisdom, to photograph that day when he stood in the temple and announced his deep purpose of soul.

“Now turn to that quiet life in Nazareth,” continued Mrs. Brown. “Remember, it was the one model life for all the world. It was lived in sympathy with the great masses who are in obscurity and humble service. A life of great publicity would be no help to them. He took upon himself the humble, obedient life that best fits for after years of strength and influence. Take this book, Barton, and read a few sentences from an eminent student of both the life of Christ and the life of men to-day.”

Barton took the book which his mother handed him, and noticing that it was Farrar's “Life of Christ,” read these words: “‘Herod might indulge in the gilded vices of a corrupt age and display the gorgeous gluttonies of a decaying civilization; but he who came to be the Friend and the Saviour, no less than the King of all, sanctioned the purer, better, simpler customs of his nation, and chose the condition in which the vast majority of mankind have ever lived, and must ever live. The world hardly attaches any significance to any life except those of its heroes or its splendid conquerors. These are, and must ever be, the

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few. But Christ came to convince us that a relative insignificance may be an absolute importance. He came to teach that continual excitement, prominent action, distinguished services, brilliant success, are not essential elements of true and noble life, and that myriads of the beloved of God are to be found among the obscure.' "

"There you may stop, Barton," said Mrs. Brown ; "when you are a little older you will enjoy reading that entire book. It is full of instruction gathered from a wide reading of the history and customs of that age. I only wanted you to catch the thought that there are many reasons why so little is said about the youth of Jesus at Nazareth, and why it was a life lived in the plain everyday humility of toil and obscurity, as most lives must be lived that Jesus came to help. If he were going to reveal a true human life for the world's study, would you want him to be a sort of Alexander the Great, or a Napoleon? Would it not be better to tell us simply that he increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man, that at twelve years of age he had a deep, noble purpose of mind and heart that boldly announced itself in these earnest words, 'Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?' "

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The evening had quickly passed. It had been a heart-searching lesson. Never before had the need of a fixed purpose seemed so important to these young people. Only one of the four, Fannie Brown, had passed into a settled union with Christ, or knew fully what such an experience meant. She for a time had trembled under the influence of George's doubts. Now she felt not a waver ; her face glowed with her clearer knowledge of the true Christian life. She felt that it was a crisis in the lives of George and Barton. She now longed, not to follow them up to some dazzling height of fame, but that they all should enter into that life of Jesus that lost sight of all but a burning ambition to fulfill life's real mission.

As they rose to go, George said what every one felt, "Life has now more meaning than I ever saw in it before ; and it all revolves about just one thing, a clear, clean, earnest purpose."

"Yes," said Fannie ; "a purpose like Christ's, George ; good-night."

CHAPTER IX

BETWEEN LESSONS

THE next few days were days of much thoughtfulness. Amelia Bancroft, the youngest of the group, saw for the first time what becoming a Christian meant. The latest lesson, which showed that Christ's purpose at twelve years of age was the only thing told us about his youth, stayed in her thoughts. "A boy or a girl without a purpose is only a chip drifting down-stream to be caught in some whirlpool! Don't be a chip; awake and serve the Lord," kept ringing in her ears. She went over to Mrs. Brown's the next afternoon and said to her that she wished she knew how to have just such a purpose as Jesus had.

Mrs. Brown told her that conversion was coming to Jesus and asking him to implant that purpose. Then they turned to the words of Christ and read, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," and Mrs. Brown said these words are fitted for life's opening, though spoken near the close of Christ's. Then she told Amelia that when any one wanted to be

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like Jesus, it was God's loving Spirit drawing them into his kingdom ; and that Jesus here tells us that if we ask him, he will give us what we seek. "Amelia, do you want this gift now?" she said.

"I do," was the earnest answer.

Then they bowed and prayed. After Mrs. Brown had asked that this child might now find rest because she came to Jesus with all her heart, she told Amelia to tell Jesus just what she wanted.

Amelia said, "Lord, take my sins away ; give me a clean heart ; make me like Jesus in the temple ; give me his love for our Heavenly Father."

Then Mrs. Brown said, "Amelia, read the next verse."

She read, "'Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart ; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.'"

"Do you see, Amelia, that the yoke means obedience to Jesus? He says that then you will find rest. There are two rests. One is the given rest, when you come to him with all your heart. Then he says that you will always be finding another sweet rest if you go on obeying in his meek and lowly way. And it is an easy yoke and a light burden to obey him, when you have his Spirit. Amelia, do

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you want both these, given rest and found rest? ”

The girl put her hand in Mrs. Brown's hand and with glistening eyes and earnest face repeated these words : “Trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for strength, I promise him that I will strive to do whatever he would like to have me do,” and Amelia Bancroft's happy heart gave a shining face. In studying about Jesus she had been won to him and had caught his spirit. They both walked over together to Pastor Little's study and had there the sort of inquiry meeting that gladdens any teacher's soul.

Lyman Bancroft had been as much interested in Jesus at twelve announcing his clear purpose for life as any child could be. That evening he had lingered with Mrs. Bancroft in the library after the others had retired. He said to his wife, “How much I missed in not having some intelligent Christian lead me over this lesson when I was the age of our children. It has always seemed such a mystery that the Gospels said almost nothing about the life of Christ from his birth till he entered on his public ministry, that I have sometimes doubted whether it could be an inspired record. It did not seem reasonable that he could be the Son of God dwelling on earth, and all his life not be

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written out. But seeing that he was showing us also a true human life, it seems the only proper thing just to show his great burning purpose to serve God at twelve years of age, and then that he lived a quiet life in subjection to his parents, growing in favor with God and man. It seems now as though if anything more had been said it would have spoiled the model."

Mrs. Bancroft had lived with her husband for nearly twenty years, but this was the first time she had ever heard him speak so freely of any real interest to know more of Christ. Though he was a noble man and a model husband, the fact that he was not an avowed Christian had put a barrier to the deepest satisfaction of her soul. Since her wedding day there had not been such union of heart as she now felt upon his turning his thoughts toward Christ and confidence in his word. She answered :

"Lyman, I have often wondered too, why there was so little said about all those years of Christ's life ; but I have not doubted that there was some wise purpose in not revealing it all ; I have trusted the Lord in what I could not understand. But it is pleasant to see so much wisdom in it. I am glad to have this lesson for our children's study. How beautiful

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it does all appear to have this great Christian purpose stand out alone as the one thing needful! Both George and Amelia have been deeply impressed to-night. You were moved with the account of Noah Webster's conversion. I was most impressed to learn that Mr. Webster and his children all came out together."

"If I had only seen this life of Christ in my youth!" said Mr. Bancroft. "I have prided myself so many years on my moral life that it is hard to acknowledge my mistake."

"But you greatly respect Mr. Webster's decision," said Mrs. Bancroft, "in humbly bowing like a little child and telling his family, and afterward the community, that he would now follow Christ. You would only be taking your place with the wise men who came and saw Christ, then bowed and worshiped him and presented their best gifts."

Then they both knelt side by side and sought to yield their hearts and their home anew to Christ.

George revealed to no one a disposition to yield to the personal claims of Christ. He was intellectually convinced of the truths of Christianity and took enjoyment in little discussions with Mr. Blanchard, for he could now confute many of the skeptic's objections. His

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ambition to enter Yale and become a great scholar made him very studious in his preparation. He already found that a careful study of the life of Christ touched so many subjects and was so greatly widening his vision of life and men, that he yielded himself to Mrs. Brown's lessons with great satisfaction. The frivolities of the evening parties lost their charm to him. The young people wondered what change had come over George Bancroft.

But Barton Brown was a perfect enigma. The one most needing this lesson of life's true purpose seemed least affected by it. It was evident at times that there was a great conflict going on in his mind, but Satan seemed to gain the victory ; then Barton's will would be more stubborn and his temper more impetuous than ever. His mother did not always know where he had gone when evening came, as she had formerly ; and when she discovered his associations she was surprised to see that he was not so choice in his companions as before. Yet at times he showed a marked thoughtfulness and devotion to study and the duties at home. He was evidently passing through a crisis. On which side victory would come could not be foretold.

Fannie had entered the woman's college, boarding at home. She also entered now

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most heartily into her mother's plans for reaching Barton and George with this spiritual uplift that was coming to all the rest who were studying the life of Jesus. George occasionally told Fannie of his discussions with Mr. Blanchard, thinking it would gratify her to know that he was becoming a sort of intellectual champion of Christianity, and hoping thereby to restore the old complete confidence that had been broken by her new nearness to her Saviour. But she had resolved that George must be a Christian before he could so completely influence her life again. Her highest aim was to make the most of her life in a true Christian purpose to be just what Christ would have her be. It was evident to George that Fannie was standing on another plane and moving away from him, notwithstanding her courteous and kind manner. She had an outlook of faith that he did not yet comprehend.

Mrs. Brown was reluctant to leave the study of Christ's youth. Yet she hoped much from the next lesson.

CHAPTER X

REVEALED AND TEMPTED

THEY all gathered for the next lesson. George introduced Avery Blanchard as a new recruit to the class. He was near the same age as George Bancroft and a son of the skeptic. His father had consented to his coming that he might learn the secret influences that were changing George's thinking. He hoped by this to be better able to hold him under his power. He thought his own son secure.

Mrs. Brown welcomed Avery with great pleasure. Then she began by recalling to mind the fact that nothing is said concerning the life of Jesus of Nazareth for all the eighteen years from twelve to thirty. Once when he returned among his old acquaintances and they were astonished at his words and works, they said, "Is not this the carpenter?" "This shows," she said, "that Jesus had lived among them during those years as a humble laborer. He who was rich, for our sakes became poor."

Then Fannie was asked to read this paragraph: "In all ages there has been an exag-

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gerated desire for wealth, an exaggerated belief in its influence in producing or increasing the happiness of life, and from these errors a flood of cares and jealousies and meannesses has devastated the life of man. And therefore Jesus chose voluntarily the low estate of the poor—not a degrading, grinding poverty, but that commonest lot of honest poverty which, though it necessitates self-denial, can provide with ease for all the necessities of a simple life. Christ labored, working with his own hands, and fashioned plows and yokes for those who needed them.”

“So you see,” said Mrs. Brown, “how our Saviour lived a lowly, industrious life, setting a beautiful example of honest toil, showing that ‘labor is a pure and noble thing ; it is the salt of life ; it is the girdle of manliness.’ In all these years we have enough revealed to see the true manliness of Christ. When he came forth as a teacher we see a wealth of knowledge of the Scriptures and of nature and men, showing that these were years of patient fitting for his public ministry. Is there any lesson for our day in this ?”

This exactly fitted George’s notion, and he promptly said, “Does it not show that we should take time to fit ourselves for public duties ?”

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“Yes ; I think,” said Mrs. Brown, “that Christ has given us an important lesson here. Have a true, noble purpose early, but take time to gather knowledge and develop strength for that mission. In this model human life these two things stand out alone till he is thirty years of age.”

Then this wise teacher mapped her work. She told her little company about the four Gospels, or Lives, of Christ, that give four sides of his character. Matthew writes of him especially as the king ; Mark, as the faithful subject ; Luke portrays largely his complete manhood ; while John brings more especially the elements of divine character and power. Hence we must study all four of the Gospels to get any right view of this wonderful life. Then they repeated together these four keywords of the four Gospels : King, Servant, Man, God.

“Now we are to study Christ’s work through the remaining three and a half years,” said Mrs. Brown, “revealing the three missions put upon the board in our first lesson. His introduction to the people as the promised Messiah was most impressive. He came in perfect keeping with the humble life he had lived at Nazareth. The first recorded words that dropped from his lips, after his announcement

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of a clear purpose in life at twelve, were these :
‘It becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.’
In this that heart purpose was matched by an active obedience. You only need to know these two things and we have it all—a clean noble purpose in the heart, and a loyal obedience to every righteous command.

“Jesus had left his home in Nazareth at thirty years of age, had come down to the Jordan opposite Jericho, where John was preaching the baptism of repentance and saying to the people that the Lord was about to appear. Jesus came meekly among the people and asked that he might be baptized. John in some way recognized him, and said he was unworthy to baptize his Lord. But Jesus said, ‘Suffer it now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.’ ”

Then Mrs. Brown handed Amelia Bancroft a book, “From Manger to Throne,” and asked her to read this description of the scene :

“Then John and Jesus walked down together beyond the water’s edge into the stream that had been the scene of so many miracles, and which had filled so large a space in Jewish history, into waters that parted at the lashing of Elijah’s girdle and which separated at the touch of the feet of those who bore the ark, at Joshua’s command ; into the Jordan, the east-

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ern boundary of the promised land, and which has ever since been a symbol of the dividing line between this world and heaven. And when the two were in the waters John gave baptism to our Saviour who, coming up out of the flood, gave voice to prayer ; and as he prayed, lo ! behold the heavens opened wide to let out an angelic chorus of praise, and down came fluttering on whitest pinions a snowy dove, the type of purity, of innocence, of spiritual blessedness, and rested upon the head of the Holy One. And from Paradise swept down the divine acknowledgment and benediction, ‘This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.’ ”

“I do not see why Jesus needed to be baptized if he was perfect,” said George ; “for this baptism was a confession of repentance.”

“Can any one repeat a passage,” said Mrs. Brown, “that implies a reason ? ”

Fannie had a marked verse to which her Bible opened easily and read, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin ; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Brown ; “and he took the form of a servant and was obedient in every particular, so that he became a perfect model for our study.”

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Amelia sat near her father as she read Mr. Talmage's description of the baptism of Jesus. She had already talked with her mother about becoming a member of the church, and Mrs. Bancroft had replied that she hoped her father would be ready to confess Christ and become a member of the church with her. So Amelia now slipped her hand quietly into the hand of her father, as she finished reading, and thus telegraphed her hope to his heart. The message was understood by the father. His thoughts flew back to Noah Webster welcomed to the church by the side of his daughter. He thought of the words of Jesus, "Thus it becometh us," and there was a silent surrender of his whole will to trust Christ and obey him in all things, which no one on earth then knew, but which was registered in heaven.

"Here comes another scene in the life of Jesus," said Mrs. Brown, "that is lifted up for our study in connection with his consecration to his great life-work. It is his temptation. He was assaulted by Satan. Jesus retired after his baptism for a season of quiet meditation and prayer. Like Moses and Elijah when they entered upon the prophetic office, so Jesus spent forty days in fasting. Here Satan came and sought to drive him into sin. Christ was no doubt tempted through his whole life,

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and in all points like as we are. This special temptation is here made prominent for two reasons ; one to show that he conquered, the other perhaps to show that special temptations beset those who enter upon public life. Three forms of temptation are mentioned which include all temptation." Then one of the others read the account in the Gospels.

"Notice these three forms of temptation to evil. Jesus hungered from long fasting. Satan said, Command that these stones be made into bread—temptation coming through physical want, the appetite. Get bread in some other way than that divinely appointed, said the tempter. It suggests the temptations to dishonesty that come in business and public life."

It had just been discovered that a trusted bookkeeper in town had been making dishonest records for years, and had cheated his firm of several thousands. Mrs. Brown told her boys that there had been a first time soon after Mr. Walker began his service in the store when he yielded to the tempter. His appetite had led him to appropriate trust funds. It had grown upon him until his sin had found him out, and he was now in lifelong disgrace. If he had conquered at the beginning he might have been safe. "Young men, learn a great

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lesson," said Mrs. Brown. "You will soon be in places of special temptation to be dishonest in things that pertain to daily bread. Be careful that you do not falter when you come to handle trust funds."

The next temptation of Satan had reference to vanity. "Said Satan to our Saviour, as he led Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple, 'Now make a show of yourself; cast yourself down; and if you are really the Son of God, as you sail away through the air unhurt you will show your greatness.' Jesus withstood, but thousands do not when they enter upon public life. How many young people become vain and live for a mere show. A proud spirit ruins multitudes.

"But the third was the temptation to mere worldly ambition of power and wealth. 'Fall down and worship me, and I will give you the world.' Thus appetite and vanity and ambition are luring the young people to all forms of sin." This became a powerful lesson for the rest of the evening. Mrs. Brown sought to show that Christ's special temptation was the great drama of human life. She pictured how Satan had deluged the world in sin and wretchedness by overcoming weak, erring mortals in these ways, and that there is only One who has fully conquered. Here we are taught

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his victory. She pointed to the Saviour meeting every temptation by a Scripture promise, and emphasized his reliance upon the divine strength that is promised to us when we trust the word of the Lord.

“My dear young people,” said Mrs. Brown, “while Satan is still tempting as truly as he tempted Jesus, and especially as you start out to do anything for yourselves, or for others, remember there is one Conqueror who can lead us all to victory. Overcome in his strength.”

Promptly at the end of the half-hour Bridget stepped in with a plate of oranges, for Mrs. Bancroft had determined that these young people should find social stimulus in their study of the life of Jesus. While they ate their oranges Mr. Bancroft said he must thank Mrs. Brown for this important lesson upon temptation as one enters upon active life.

“I have never before realized,” said he, “that here was lifted up in the real life of Christ an acted drama of every human life. Few understand how fiercely come these temptations to young men as they enter upon business or any service of trust. I begin to see that I owe it more to my Christian mother for her teaching than to any real strength in myself that I was kept from falling.”

Revealed and Tempted

Never had the real conflict of life stood out before all these young people as now. These boys had all met little experiences that had shown them something of their own weakness. But that life was beset with Satanic influences fierce and strong, with which they must grapple, they now saw as a new vision. They were ready to follow Christ back to his life-work with new interest. Avery Blanchard saw even in this first half-hour, that a study of the Christ life entered into our own struggles as he had never before dreamed. They all now turned to that sweetest picture of the Gospels, gathering his first disciples.

CHAPTER XI

CHOOSING COMPANIONS

DURING the few minutes that intervened, the young people walked out upon the piazza. Fannie had been so busy in beginning the new year in the college that she had seen little of the young people of the neighborhood of late. She greeted George and Avery cordially. Her new faith and more advanced studies and associations had combined to give her a dignity and grace of manner beyond her years.

“What has changed you so of late,” said George, “that you do not seem the same girl?”

“Why, George, did you expect me always to remain the same giddy child of a year ago? I hope,” continued Fannie, “that we are all making some advance. ‘Mounting Heavenward,’ is my motto. I have wondered this evening if we could begin a little circle here to-night all having this one aim. Let it be the secret charm that holds us together. As soon as any one of our old company is drawn toward the Christ, let this be the pledge, motto,

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password, aim, bond, all in these two words, 'Mounting Heavenward.' This will make us all friends and helpers. What do you say, Avery, to beginning such a circle?"

"I cannot say, Miss Fannie, without more thought. You know my teaching has been very different from yours. I scarcely know why I am here to-night. Last evening George and I took a walk. He seemed to have some new vision of life and kept saying that he had been a drifting chip, but that from now on there should be an anchored purpose. I asked where he caught his new inspiration. He invited me to come this evening. I am convinced already that I have been greatly mistaken about what true life is. I must move away from the influence of my old associates, for the temptations are too strong. I will think of this new circle. What do you say, George?"

"Can we begin with three," said George, "for your new circle, Fannie?"

A tap of the bell on the library table brought all together for another half-hour lesson. Mrs. Brown recalled how the temptation of Jesus, the symbolic picture of our lives, left the Saviour victorious, and the scene greatly moved the heavenly world, for "the angels came and ministered unto him."

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“Then he returned to the camp and the gathering crowds at the Jordan,” said Mrs. Brown, “and John pointed him out to the expectant multitudes, saying, ‘Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!’ It seemed to make little impression upon the people, for they were looking for a great king to appear in a royal chariot. Jesus seems to have quietly prepared a booth for his dwelling-place and moved among the crowds unnoticed. But the next day John was talking with two of his disciples when he saw Jesus passing. He said again, ‘Behold the Lamb of God!’ These two young men immediately followed after Jesus, and overtaking him said, ‘Master, where dwellest thou?’ He answered, ‘Come and see.’ And they went and tarried with him that night in his tent. These two were the youngest and most devout and watchful of Christ’s disciples as long as they lived. Who were these young men who alone started the sacred circle of Christ’s companionship?”

Fannie had anticipated the question and promptly read from John’s Gospel, “‘One of the two was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother.’”

“Do you know,” said Mrs. Brown, “that this name Andrew really means manly? It is a beautiful fact and seems to me prophetic.

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Those who leave all to follow Christ were first called disciples, meaning learners ; after a while the disciples were called Christians, meaning Christ-likes. And to be Christlike is to be the manliest of all men."

"I was looking up and down these shelves to-day," said George, "to find a theme for an essay, and I was surprised to notice, 'The Manliness of Jesus,' as the title of a book."

"Yes, it is a book that I hope you may be drawn to read carefully," said Mrs. Brown ; "and since you have mentioned it, suppose you take it now and open to the last chapter and read those words of Tennyson at the heading."

He turned to the required page and read these lines :

"Thou seem'st both human and divine ;
The highest, holiest manhood Thou !"

"He was a manly man—his character matched his name—this Andrew that was the first disciple to enter the charmed circle of his faithful followers. And from Andrew to Mr. Gladstone every disciple has been made only the more manly for his friendship with Jesus. What men these became ! Andrew and John, these two who talked it all over with the Master that afternoon and night, in the blessed

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arbor of Jesus that he had woven of reeds and palm branches. It was a small, weak circle as it appeared to men ; the bruised reeds over them fitly represented the new society. But it embraced the all-conquering Christ, so the palm branches, emblems of victory, were interwoven about the three who formed this embryo company which now enlarged marches to encircle the earth ! ”

Mrs. Brown spoke with a feeling that brought the scene very vividly before them. The conversation of the three on the piazza a few moments before when Fannie had proposed forming, there and then, a circle with the motto, “Mounting Heavenward,” seemed so like that visit to the Saviour, that George and Avery looked each into the other’s face with strange bewilderment. The centuries disappeared, and they felt that the life of Jesus was a present reality. Never before had the young men so felt the fact of a personal Christ drawing them upward by his own presence !

“How long did this circle remain but the three ? ” said the leader. “What took place immediately following ? ”

It was Amelia who answered, “Andrew found his own brother Simon and brought him to Jesus.”

“Yes, and it is thought that the other, John,

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went and brought his brother James also," said Mrs. Brown; "for he is soon found among the chosen companions of the Saviour, and no mention is made of when he came. Then soon Jesus met Philip, who was from the same town in Galilee as Andrew and his brother, whose name Jesus had changed to Peter. So each of the three had brought another. Then Philip met his friend Nathanael and invited him to visit Jesus at his booth. He at first doubted. Nazareth was only six miles from his own home; he did not believe that the promised Messiah could have his home in such a despised village. But he came to see for himself. Jesus told Nathanael that he had seen him when he went alone for meditation and prayer under the fig tree that morning. Nathanael was greatly surprised, for he knew that no human eye had seen him in his quiet retreat. He at once acknowledged Jesus as the Son of God and joined the circle of chosen companions. It had now become a company of five or six who soon returned with Jesus to Galilee. This was the quiet beginning of Christ's ministry. What does it suggest? I will ask Avery, our new recruit, that question."

Avery Blanchard's thoughts had been busy with the fact that he had of late unconsciously drifted to a class of associates that were drag-

ging him downward. It was now difficult to shake loose from them. He was surprised to find himself confronted with this question, in such surroundings. He said honestly, however, that this matter of choosing companions was uppermost in his thoughts. "Mrs. Brown," said he, "I am sick and tired of the associates that have been around me the past year, and I have been wondering how I might be drawn out of them. I am sure I need more manly companions if I ever amount to anything."

"Avery," said Mrs. Brown, "you suggest a paragraph that I saw recently in 'Looking Backward.' It was called the 'Rosebush of Humanity.' Suppose you read it," and she handed him the book at the open page.

So he read : " 'Humanity is like a rosebush planted in a swamp, watered with black bog-water, breathing miasmatic fogs by day and chilled with poisonous dews by night. Gardeners had done their best to make it bloom, but beyond an occasional half-opened bud, with a worm at the heart, their efforts had been unsuccessful. Many claimed that it was not a rosebush at all. Finally the idea of transplanting it found favor. So it came about that the rosebush of humanity was transplanted and set in sweet, warm, dry earth, where the sun bathed it, the stars wooed it, and the south

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wind caressed it. Then it appeared that it was indeed a rosebush. The vermin and the mildew disappeared, and the bush was covered with most beautiful red roses whose fragrance filled the world.' "

"I am glad, Avery," said Mrs. Brown, "that you have yourself felt that there is danger in bad associates."

"I find that I cannot grow in a swamp," he replied ; "and I need transplanting from this black bog-water."

"This is the power of studying Christ's life ; it is continually making its own application to our lives," said Mrs. Brown. "But Christ not only transplanted ; he also engrafted into his own life. He not only called these men to himself, but also implanted within them a new love, so that through them his fragrance fills the world."

In a few moments they followed Christ and his half-dozen disciples back to Galilee. They saw their journey to Cana, the home of Nathanael. A wedding was there, and the mother of Jesus had been invited. So the Saviour and his new friends were called to the wedding.

"Here Jesus performed his first miracle," said the leader ; "he began his ministry by sanctioning the marriage relation and the

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planting of a new home. No one knows where the Garden of Eden was. Sin swept it away. Only one frail plant, carried down the river Euphrates, lodged in the banks and took root again. When two hearts affianced in love go out to establish a new home, and invite Jesus to sanction their union—that is Paradise regained ! His first disciples asked him, ‘Master, where dwellest thou?’ Ever since then he has been asking every new disciple the same question. Can we always invite him as he invited them, ‘Come and see’?”

“Why did Jesus work this miracle?” asked George.

“I suppose,” said Mrs. Brown, “that like nearly all the miracles of Jesus it combined ‘the characteristics of a work of mercy, an emblem and a prophecy.’ But I cannot help feeling, since he afterward established wine as an emblem of his blood of sacrifice, to be used through all the coming ages of the gospel, that this was a hidden prophecy at the beginning of his ministry of that last supper with his disciples, when he said, ‘This cup is the blood of the new covenant.’ As he made a bountiful provision at this first supper with his disciples for all the guests, so his gift of himself would be ample for all who should come to the marriage feast of the Lamb.”

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Here the lesson closed. It was decided that Avery should now join the class. George walked with him to the Blanchard door.

“Shall we accept the invitation of Fannie to form a secret circle,” said George as they parted, and take as our aim and motto, ‘Mounting Heavenward’?”

They stood, hand in hand, in silence for a moment. Then Avery answered, “I must give it more thought, George; this means new business to me. You know I must encounter father’s opposition. But I need help to get away from the set of fellows that have gathered around me. I must get out of the swamp and stop breathing miasmatic fogs by day and being chilled by poisonous dews at night. Give me another week to think of all that Fannie means by this new circle. I feel now as if that arbor of reeds and palm branches, that the two young men of the lesson visited, would settle the question. I wish you and I, George, could walk out to-night and lodge in that same tent. It seems as if I could almost hear his voice saying, ‘Come and see.’”

Then these two young men separated with a promise to be mutual helpers and to follow this class study together through the coming winter.

CHAPTER XII

THE NEW HOME

CIRCUMSTANCES prevented the meeting for two weeks. During that time Mrs. Bancroft had invited Pastor Little to tea that he might have conversation with her husband. The pastor was quite surprised to find the banker ready to speak freely upon religion. An entire change of views was clearly announced. The distinguished moralist had formerly over-awed the pastor by his complete confidence in his own uprightness, but now his childlike trust and his tender expressions of attachment to the Saviour were unmistakable.

“To what do you attribute,” said the pastor, “your conversion, Mr. Bancroft? It is quite unusual to see a man of your years and position show such sudden and marked change of mind!”

“I am, sir, a great surprise to myself,” said the banker. “I went to the library, one evening, to visit with the family, and there I found Mrs. Brown and the children studying the life of Christ. I was at once drawn to consider the present-day reality of the Christ-life

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as never before. I continued to follow these lessons until my heart was won to receive the Saviour in the same childlike spirit as my little girl, Amelia. And now she and I are beginning the new life together. We wish you to instruct us as to the path of obedience."

It was all arranged that they should make their profession of faith by baptism the next Sabbath ; and thus Amelia and her father became members of the church. The quiet community was no little stirred when at the close of the evening service Pastor Little introduced Mr. Bancroft to tell the congregation of his new faith. His calm words told of his seeing Jesus within the past few weeks, just as if he had really visited their town as he used to visit the villages of Galilee. His conversion introduced no bewildering doctrine ; it was the happy acquaintance of the Christ who was now a loved friend. His brief statement left a peculiar impression that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.

The evening for the lesson came, and the little company were in the library. Avery Blanchard came with an anxious expression. His father had noticed his reading the Bible since that first lesson. At first he had supposed it was merely a search for arguments, but when he observed the quiet search of the

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Gospels, Mr. Blanchard was alarmed. That evening Avery said to his father that he wished to join the class at Mr. Bancroft's. His father forbade it. He had heard of the statements of the banker at the church services; hence he feared the strange influence of that class. "If you insist upon going, you must leave my roof," said the infidel.

"Father," said the young man, "I must investigate these facts for myself. I supposed from your willingness two weeks ago, that I had your approval when I united with the class. Now I am determined calmly to investigate this subject just as I am studying other history in school." So with the earnest protest of his father Avery had come for the evening's study.

"Our last lesson," said Mrs. Brown, "left Jesus in Galilee, where his first miracle sanctioned the marriage and the establishing of a new home. John's Gospel says, 'After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples.' About this time we conclude that Jesus and his mother moved their home from Nazareth to Capernaum. His disciples seemed to have gone to their old employment as fishermen on the sea of Galilee. Some of them lived at Capernaum. It is probable that Jesus and

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Mary made their home with Peter, who was a prosperous householder at Capernaum.

“When they left the wedding at Cana it is more than probable that he visited Nazareth. The jealousy and hatred that Nazareth afterward showed, no doubt began now. To save his mother and himself from these constant scenes of wrangling, from the bitter opposition of neighbors and relatives, they quietly withdrew to Capernaum, which is afterward called ‘his own city.’ So our lesson marks a very important era in his life. The new home of Jesus suggests that as he was driven from Bethlehem in the beginning by persecution, so they would not allow him longer a place at Nazareth. He breathed blessing upon a new home for others at his first miracle. He provided a home for his aged mother by some of his last words from the cross. But during his ministry he was never allowed a place on earth where he could lay his head in peace, till the burial in Joseph’s new tomb.”

Then they turned their attention to Capernaum. Barton drew again a hasty map of Palestine on the board. They saw how Capernaum was some twenty-four miles northeast of Nazareth, and situated near the north end of the sea of Galilee. The beautiful little lake was described, in shape like a pear, some thir-

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teen miles long and six broad. A half-dozen populous towns gathered around the lake were spoken of ; but Capernaum was the largest, and here Jesus chose his home. It was noticed as a city of some twenty-five thousand residents at that time, while it was constantly visited by people from various lands.

“Was there any special reason,” asked Mrs. Brown, “why Jesus should choose Capernaum for his chief residence, where most of his mighty works should be done ?”

Then one contributed this and another that, until they had gathered the following facts : It was the most populous city of Galilee. It was on “the way of the sea,” the great open road that led from Damascus and the east to the Mediterranean, upon which the great caravans carried back the merchandise of Tyre and the west through to Persia. Crossing this great road of traffic at Capernaum were several other roads ; one down the Jordan Valley to Jericho and Jerusalem, another was the road of the eastern merchants to Egypt, another through Samaria to Jerusalem. All these great roads crossed or centered at Capernaum. Here was the great market for food for the multitude of travelers. Here the fishermen disciples had plied their successful business. Here they easily replenished the slender purse after their

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tours with Christ. Here the multitudes passed from both Europe and Africa on their great journeys to the East. Hence, what a center for seed-sowing this furnished the great teacher! His three years' ministry permitted Jesus to come in touch with men from all the Gentile nations. Twenty years afterward, wheresoever the evangelists carried the news of salvation through Christ, there were witnesses to rise up and say that they had heard Jesus in Capernaum, and could testify that "never man spake like this man."

"Surely," said Mrs. Brown, "this was his own city, for the market places of Capernaum were thronged with representatives of the wide world. While it must have been with sadness that Jesus went out from Nazareth, driven from home by the unbelief and malice of kindred and acquaintance, he went to enlarged privilege and faithful friendships. It will always be so to those who suffer for his name's sake. They will follow him out to wider privilege and richer friendship."

Mrs. Brown was not then aware of Avery Blanchard's position. But his own thoughts were busy in the application, and it was a word in season. Mr. Bancroft who had just been driven out of his old fortress of self-sufficiency to his enlarged hopes in Christ, and had the

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past Sunday taken up his home in the Christian church, saw application to himself.

“I wish to tell you,” said he, “how true that is in my own experience. I sat alone in this room after one of these lessons, feeling that my old refuge of self-trust must be abandoned. My old unbelief condemned me. I did not dare tarry another night where for twenty years I had felt so secure. At first I saw nothing but that picture of faith clinging to the cross ; and the cross I had long despised. I thought, if I simply clung to that, I must abandon all my old friends and stand alone. But when I followed Christ out, what a change ! As you were picturing Jesus going out, driven from the wild rocks of narrow Nazareth to the grassy slopes and crystal lake and green mountains that surrounded the white marble city of bright Capernaum, I felt that it was a picture of the new home into which I have come.”

Just here watchful Bridget stepped in with the dainty cups of hot chocolate and ginger-cake that she had found so welcome on other evenings, and the company moved about for a few minutes' change of position. Avery took George's arm and in the reception hall they dropped upon the stairs.

“George,” said he, “I am not sure that I can remain another night under my father's

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roof, because I came here this evening. This lesson has a peculiar illustration in my case. Mr. Bancroft's uniting with the church last Sunday had stirred father against my coming here. I told him I must investigate for myself. He said then that I could not remain at home."

George replied, "Avery, I did not think of drawing you into trouble by inviting you here ; will you forgive me?"

"I cannot be too thankful that I came, George. I have had two weeks of new association and at least decent respect for myself in a new desire to make something of life. I shall leave my home with regret. But your father's words to-night have put new courage in my heart. I am determined to go with Jesus from Nazareth to Capernaum, cost what it may. I wish that I could feel that I was entering such a circle as Miss Fannie mentioned."

Just then Fannie and Amelia returned from the piazza, and George beckoned them to the stairway. "Fannie," said George, "have you thought more of your new organization? We wanted then, you know, more time to think of it. Avery has just said that he needs just such help. I thought perhaps we might start it now."

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“Oh, you are too late,” said Fannie ; “the circle has already been organized. Amelia and I have just joined hands and formed this circle, taking as our motto, ‘Mounting Heavenward.’ Our constitution, by-laws, creed, aim, are all unwritten and are contained in these words, *To know and follow Jesus*. It must be composed of voluntary members. No one is urged to unite.”

Avery at once extended his hand to the two girls, saying, “This is all I know of the new life : I long to know and follow Jesus, and if this is mounting heavenward, I start up the ladder.”

George was completely surprised at Avery’s decision, under the trial that he saw awaited him. He believed the skeptic would keep the threat to drive his son from home, from his well-known reputation.

Just then the bell rang to regather the class for another half-hour study. So George did not enter the charmed circle. There was something lacking. He had not yet reached the point where he could say :

We rise by the things that are under our feet—
By what we have mastered of good or gain,
By the pride deposed and the passion slain,
And the vanquished ill that we hourly meet.

CHAPTER XIII

THOROUGHLY COMMITTED

“**W**HEN and where and how,” said Mrs. Brown, “did Jesus begin his public ministry? It is some six months since he first left Nazareth, was baptized, and pointed out as the promised Messiah. We have followed his course to the new home at Capernaum, where John says he tarried not many days. Has he really begun his public ministry yet?”

This was a new thought to these young people. They had supposed that they were already in the midst of the study of that ministry, yet they could recall no sermon or public teaching. Hence curiosity was quite awakened to know how Christ did enter upon his work as a teacher come from God.

“Where would it seem most likely,” said the leader, “for him who was born King of the Jews to take his scepter of authority?”

“Why, at Jerusalem,” said they all.

“Yes; hence said the Saviour at Cana to his mother, ‘Mine hour is not yet come.’ The prophet had said ‘The Lord will suddenly come to his temple; but who may abide the

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day of his coming?' The Passover was at hand and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. There he began the great mission he came to fulfill by cleansing the temple. For a year John the Baptist had heralded his approach. Rumor and fear had excited much curiosity as to when and how the Messiah would be made king. So when Jesus of Nazareth came to this Passover and found the court of the temple filled with noisy traffickers bartering in animals within the sacred courts, he took a small cord and drove out the sheep and oxen and commanded the men to depart with their doves. There was at once a profound impression that the Lord had come to the temple, and the men fled in fear.

"Here began that wonderful three years of Christ's public ministry. It began in Jerusalem, at the Passover, by cleansing the temple.

"Then came the rulers of the temple and asked by what authority he did these things, or to show them a sign. Christ replied, 'Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.' This was his first clear reference to his death and resurrection; for he spoke of the temple of his body. During these days of the Passover he performed many miracles, and many of the people believed on him as the promised Messiah. And one night Nicodemus,

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a leading member of the Jewish council, came and acknowledged Jesus as a teacher come from God ; and the Saviour taught him clearly concerning the greatest doctrine of our religion, that all men must be 'born again.'

"So here were three things that marked the beginning of our Lord's ministry ; the cleansing of the temple, the first announcement of his death and resurrection, and the teaching of regeneration as the necessity of every soul. These truths were enforced by many miracles. From this time Jesus went forth upon his three wonderful years till he again ascended to the throne of heaven with all power given into his hands."

Then they mapped out the Saviour's three years of journeying and toil and teaching.

"Each year seemed to bear special witness to one thing. The first year put emphasis upon the manly Man. The second year witnessed to his coming as the Son of God. The last year's teaching made more prominent than before his sacrifice as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. The three great facts of Christ's mission to earth seem to stand out in this order of development. It will help us if we keep these three thoughts connected with the three years of his public ministry."

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Then the blackboard was used, for Mrs. Brown believed that the eye helped the ear to receive truth. She put upon the board these three truths taught at the first Passover :

Temple Cleansed—A PURE MANHOOD.

Resurrection—GOD MANIFESTED.

Born Again—HIS SACRIFICE ACCEPTED.

“Why,” said Amelia, “these are the white and the blue and the red threads that we had woven into Christ’s life in our first lesson !”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Brown ; “I am glad you recall that lesson. You know that you remember the multiplication table so well because you went over it, and over it, and over it again. I want you to fix in your minds these first principles in Christ’s life and teachings, so that they shall always be as familiar as the multiplication table. I see that the white, blue, and red have helped you remember the three things for which Jesus came to earth. You may tell us, Amelia, what these colors represent.”

When Amelia had given this little picture from their first lesson, they all repeated in concert, “The white represents, he came to reveal a perfect human life. The blue represents, he came to reveal God’s character. The

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red represents, he came as the Lamb of God to make an offering for sin.”

As Avery Blanchard had not been present at the first lesson, he said, “Teacher, I shall remember that by the red, white, and blue of the American flag.”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Brown, “that is a good suggestion. We should be both patriots and Christians ; our two banners blend the same colors. And I love the flag of my country the more because it is always suggesting the Christ, who is the ensign of his people. White is everywhere the emblem of purity ; blue, the color of the sky, represents ‘the One who dwells above’ ; while the red is token of ‘the blood of Calvary.’ Christ was careful to weave these three thoughts into the opening of his public ministry at the first Passover ; for he desired from the beginning that they receive him as the God-Man, who comes to redeem from sin, and to renew the soul.”

Avery sat with breathless attention. He had for some time been deeply convinced that his father was a very unhappy man in his skepticism. He had been awakened to see that his own past associations had no helps or hopes. Suddenly a great crisis had come. He had enraged his father and must leave home, or stifle this call to follow the Saviour. Mrs.

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Brown read in his anxious face that he was as sincere an inquirer as was Nicodemus. She felt impressed that this was the moment for the Saviour to speak again that same night lesson. So she said :

“ Turn now all to your Bibles and listen to Christ as he instructs a sincere inquirer. Once a friend said to me, ‘ If the whole Bible were to be lost from the world, except one verse, what verse would you think best to keep ? ’ I replied that I might change my mind about it after more reflection ; but as I then thought, I should prefer to retain John 3 : 16, ‘ God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. ’ But I have never changed my mind after years of thought. These were the words that Jesus uttered to Nicodemus when he asked how a man could be born again. The Saviour told this inquirer that he must be ‘ born of the Spirit, ’ but Nicodemus said that he could not understand it. True, said the Saviour, no man understands the work of the Spirit, any more than he understands whence the wind comes or whither it goes ; he only feels its effects. It is God’s work to change the heart ; you do not need to understand his part of the work. But man’s part in conversion is to trust him-

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self in the hands of God, just as a little child puts its hand in the hand of its father and is willing to be led. We are born again, said Jesus, the very moment we yield our wills to him as our Teacher and our Redeemer.

“He is standing here to-night,” continued Mrs. Brown, “teaching that same lesson as really as he taught it to Nicodemus at the beginning. He was then in the flesh ; he is now here in the word. If we will not trust him when he speaks by the word, neither would we believe if he came back in flesh. He stands here at the door of our hearts, knocking by the word, by this very truth we are studying. He says, ‘I come to cleanse this temple ; I am he that was dead and am alive again ; God so loved your soul that he gave his only begotten Son to die in your stead ; receive his great salvation.’ Our next lesson will follow Jesus as he goes out on that weary journey of three years, to bring to light life and immortality. I wish to close our lesson to-night with these lines.” And Mrs. Brown read with a full heart Hollis Freeman’s poem entitled, “Nicodemus’ Night Visit” :

“ When night had spread her solemn veil
O’er earth’s fair face of light,
He came, this ruler of the Jews,
To our dear Lord by night.

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- “ Reproach him not, nor dare to blame,
For souls Christ washes white,
Through sin’s deep gloom, and guilt’s dark shade
First come to him by night.
- “ When doubts and fears o’erwhelm our soul,
Faint burns the torch of hope,
In the dark midnight of despair,
To seek his face we grope.
- “ When on our lives the chastening rod
Falls with a crushing blight,
Through weakness then we seek for strength,
And come to him by night.
- “ When clouds o’erhang the golden sky
Of youth’s brief morning bright,
And fade life’s garlands, wreathed by hope,
We turn to him by night.
- “ And when upon the face we love
Rests that strange pallor white,
With frozen hearts and tearless eyes
We come to him by night
- “ For hearts that never sought his love
When laughed life’s glowing light,
Will turn to him when shadows fall.
And day is turned to night.
- “ When storms have wrecked our happy dreams,
Forsaken in grief’s blight,
Alone, with cruel pain and loss
We find the cross by night.
- “ When coldly frowns the selfish world,
And lips are prone to blame,

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We cling unto the sheltering rock,
In the dark night of shame.

“Oh, happy souls, that trembling come
To thee, dear Lord, by night,
The morning dawns with rosy wings,
And brings celestial light !”

When she had finished reciting these lines, Mrs. Brown with her children immediately withdrew to her cottage. She wished to leave each one to his own thoughts.

Every line seemed a special message to Avery's heart. George and he were soon left together in the library. Avery buried his face in his hands and sobbed aloud. He felt that he must go out into the night, he knew not where. George invited him as he arose to go, to lodge with him.

“No,” said the thoughtful youth ; “then your father would be blamed for taking me away from home. Good-night, George,” and he went out alone upon the street. When he had gone a block he saw the light in Mrs. Brown's cottage. He decided to go in and tell her all. “Can I see you alone, Mrs. Brown?” said Avery.

“Certainly,” she replied.

He was now calm and told her the words that had passed between him and his father. Mrs. Brown had known Mr. Blanchard almost

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from her childhood. He had never been known to recant.

“Avery,” she said, after a moment’s reflection, “you are in your senior year at the high school ; have you had any thought what course you were to pursue after next June ? ”

“I had hoped to study medicine,” he replied.

“Has your father approved of that course ? ” she asked.

“He did not object when I mentioned it to him,” said Avery.

“Would you be willing to go to Doctor Sinnett’s now and do any chores that he might desire for your board, and continue, till you graduate, a sort of servant, with the understanding that you were to remain then in his office to study ? ”

“If he needs me ; I am willing to work night and day,” said Avery.

“Then lodge with Barton to-night ; we will walk down to the doctor’s office now, and perhaps you can go there in the morning.”

Mrs. Brown went with Avery at once. She had just learned that day that the doctor wanted a young man to come into his home. “There are special reasons, doctor,” said Mrs. Brown, “why Avery would like to come to-morrow morning—reasons that need not be

Thoroughly Committed

now mentioned ; we can talk with you in confidence at another time.”

It was all arranged, and Avery Blanchard returned to Mrs. Brown’s cottage, where that night he yielded himself completely to Christ as the two bowed together in prayer. He came to Jesus “by night.”

CHAPTER XIV

THE WEARIED TOILER

THE lesson of the next week was changed to Friday evening, making it some ten days before they met again in the Bancroft library. There was much sickness in town, so that Avery Blanchard, with his school duties, was kept very busy. The doctor was called up two or three times each night, and Avery must make these night drives with him. This loss of sleep, with the care of the horses and the house furnace, made the position very tiring for the young student.

He had gone, at Mrs. Brown's direction, the very morning of the engagement and told his father that he was to live with the doctor in order to study medicine. He was so kindly in his statement about this opening and his being needed at once, that Mr. Blanchard said nothing about the religious question.

His mother was a discouraged woman, having been compelled for peace' sake to smother her religious activity for many years past. She loved her son, but she could only quietly endure. So she felt relieved that matters had

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taken this turn to save her home from the disgrace of the son being driven away.

George went to Mrs. Brown the next morning after that lesson, to tell her about Avery's trouble. He was quite surprised to find that she knew it all and had gone with him the night before and arranged for his home. She said to George that as they two alone knew of the Blanchard trouble it would be wise to mention it to no one ; then it would not become unpleasant gossip. Then said she :

“ George, Avery Blanchard has proved that first great lesson in the life of Jesus, of God's protecting care over those who trust him. Do you remember that when we were following Joseph and Mary fleeing with the child into Egypt, you thought they would be looked upon as suspicious characters in Egypt and left in disgrace in their hiding? Then we saw how it had all been arranged that they should have the gold and myrrh and frankincense put in their hands, so that they could be in Egypt in the position of the most honorable merchants who came from the far East bearing these sweet spices for the embalming trade. When Avery left you, last evening, you thought again, ‘ He has been driven out in disgrace ! ’ Without knowing his circumstance, I felt impressed to read that little poem to close our lesson last

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evening. He came here afterward and asked me to read again those words. When I came to the verse,

When on our lives the chastening rod
Falls with a crushing blight,
Through weakness then we seek for strength,
And come to Him by night,

Avery said, 'Now, Mrs. Brown, please read that last verse.' Then I read in connection with the other, these lines :

O happy souls, that trembling come
To thee, dear Lord, by night ;
The morning dawns with rosy wings,
And brings celestial light.

Avery looked into my face and said, 'Mrs. Brown, does that mean me, as I go out upon the street without a home this dark night, that something is to open for me to-morrow morning, to hide me from this disgrace?' 'Certainly,' I replied, and with as much confidence as I had pointed him to trust Jesus to save his soul. When he then told me that it had been his plan, with his father's approval too, to study medicine, I saw at once why Dr. Sinnett had that very day told me that he very much needed a faithful young man in his home.

"Avery had gone out with his father's threat, feeling that he must know and follow

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Jesus. He was led to take as his motto henceforth, 'Mounting Heavenward.' Our Heavenly Father had just as much arranged for Avery's honorable home the next morning in Dr. Sinnett's fine mansion, and to have our town paper state the fact the next evening that Avery Blanchard had become a medical student with our leading physician—arranged all just as surely as he arranged for Mary and Joseph to make honorable journey into Egypt. The Christ was here with Avery just as surely as he was with them. O George, are you still reading these facts as ancient history, instead of seeing Jesus with us in the word as he dwelt then in the flesh? How long before you and Barton are to read these truths 'in the living present'?"

George returned home, asking himself how it came that Avery Blanchard, the son of the skeptic, had been thus brought into this new life, had even taken Fannie Brown's hand and entered into the charmed circle "Mounting Heavenward," while he himself, who had a few months before alone shared her complete confidence, was now drifting farther and farther away.

When Friday evening came they were again together in the Bancroft library. The banker had become very much attached to these half-

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hour studies with the Christ. He said this evening that he looked forward to this study with the children with deeper interest than to banking hours.

“We now follow Jesus out from Jerusalem,” said Mrs. Brown, “after the first Passover. He went with his disciples through the towns and villages of Judea, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, and baptizing great companies of disciples—though Jesus baptized not, but his disciples—much as John the Baptist was preaching and baptizing. John was gradually working his way up the Jordan preaching in Galilee, until at last he reached Tiberias on the sea of Galilee where Herod Antipas had a royal palace. John’s plain preaching against sin enraged the king’s household and John was cast into prison. News of this came to Jesus in Judea, and he started back to Galilee seemingly to continue John’s faithful teaching and fulfill his proclamation that the Messiah had come.

“As Jesus and his disciples passed through Samaria they came at noontime to Sychar, the place of Jacob’s well. Jesus after more than six months’ constant labor from village to village through Judea, by day and by night oftentimes, bearing the sorrows and sufferings of his visitors, came and sat at the well wearied.

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It gives us the picture of Christ as 'The Wearied Toiler,' going about doing good. He dropped upon the stone well curb, so weary and exhausted from the long journey on foot after months of constant toil, that the disciples hastened to the neighboring village to buy food and prepare a noon lunch.

"While they were gone a woman came to draw water. Jesus asked her for a drink of water and this opened a conversation concerning the water of life which he alone could give, that forms one of the most beautiful pictures in the Gospels."

Here Mrs. Brown took a book from the table and opened to a chapter on "The Thirsty Giver of Living Water," and asked Avery to read a few sentences which she had marked concerning this scene at Jacob's well. Then his own thirsty soul found great satisfaction, as he came in from a week's most weary toil to take his seat with his wearied Master and follow this story :

"There are seven sayings of our Lord in this conversation, which may be regarded as the seven rounds of a ladder whose foot is on earth and its top in heaven. The first is the request, 'Give me to drink,' which reveals a true manhood of physical need and dependent on help. The last is the full revelation of his

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dignity in 'I that speak unto thee am he.' How wide the distance between these two, the path from the valley to the height! If we look at this scene with enlightened eyes, how wonderful and precious it is, as one pathetic evidence of the true humanity and humiliation of our Lord! He whose goings forth were of old sat, a weary traveler, too tired to go with the disciples to buy food which he needed. Jesus at last throws back the cloak, of which he had let a fold or two be blown aside, and stands confessed in his full sovereign authority. That Christ who comes to give the Spirit which is the water of life, and to reveal the Father, and to make worship in spirit and truth possible for the humblest, will hold familiar converse with outcasts and sinners!"

"Then," said Mrs. Brown, "when the woman's conscience was stirred she believed on Christ and hastened back to tell her friends the story. The disciples returned and found the wearied Master busy with this departing inquirer. He seemed refreshed. They wondered if some one had brought him food. He said 'I have meat to eat that ye know not of.' They could not understand what he meant. Then said Jesus plainly, 'My meat is to do the will of him that sent me.' By this time they could see the people returning with the woman,

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who had told them she had met the Christ. Then Jesus told them of the refreshing joy of being permitted to reap in such a harvest of souls ! Many of this people believed on Jesus and pressed him to remain, and he tarried with them two days and then went on to Galilee.

“ How these two days of the wearied, toiling Saviour in Samaria helped the disciples to gather a great harvest of souls among this very people a few years afterward ! How little we realize when we toil on at a present duty, what blessing it may bring in after years to ourselves or others ! Jesus foresaw where this conversation with the woman would lead ; therefore that cup of cold water from her hand was more refreshing than the richest feast.

“ Let us learn one lesson,” she continued, “ this lesson of faith, that the hardest toil is sometimes thrust upon us that we may reap richer blessing for all future years.”

With this new lesson drawn from the Saviour's weary toil, Avery Blanchard went back to another hard week, refreshed and strengthened. Little did he dream that this present humble service about the doctor's stable was in the line of great blessing soon to follow, but he said to himself, “ I will patiently toil and prayerfully trust.”

“ After two days, Jesus and his disciples,”

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said the leader, "went on into Galilee, and began his work with such abundant preaching and healing and journeying from place to place, that Matthew and Mark and Luke all began their accounts of his public ministry from this time of his coming into Galilee ! Though it is a whole year after his baptism, if it were not for John's Gospel, we should suppose that this was the very first of his ministry. This Galilean work was thrust upon the Saviour, as we have seen him, coming up from Judea wearied with many months of hardest toil. Matthew thus describes the scenes that now attended him :

" 'And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria : and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy ; and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes of people.' This gives the picture of the closing part of Jesus' first year of toil. Do you think he was weary but once ? "

Here Mrs. Bancroft interrupted, saying,

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“Excuse me, Mrs. Brown ; Bridget is waiting at the door with a plate of hot doughnuts ; can you pause in your lesson for a few moments?”

“Well,” said the leader in reply, “I suspect we too seldom get so enrapt, as did our Saviour, that we cannot pause for food. It is a fitting place in our lesson to prepare for a new scene in our Lord’s life.”

George had not seen much of Avery during the past busy week, so they soon passed into the reception room for conversation.

“George,” said Avery, “have you started up the ladder yet, and taken the motto of the new circle?”

George did not know how to answer. Before he had time to frame an excuse, Fannie and Amelia came into the room, to greet Avery with cordial hand—the open grip of their new society. George, somewhat irritated that he had not been drawn within this circle of peculiar friendship, said :

“I do not understand your grip, nor do I see any meaning to it.”

Said Fannie, “George, I hope you will soon be ready to start with us :

“We rise by the things that are under our feet—

By what we have mastered of good or gain,

By the pride deposed and the passion slain,

And the vanquished ill that we hourly meet.”

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But alas, this was just the point George had not reached. Pride was not deposed. He could not put his foot upon the first round of the ladder until he was willing to step down from the throne of self within his heart. He was mainly ambitious to stand first at Yale. He had thought a few weeks ago that he would at once become a Christian when assured that some of the first men of this age followed Christ. He had been moved greatly for a few days at his father's profession and had been amazed at Avery Blanchard, the son of the skeptic, almost driven from home, now so changed.

But the bell called them back to the library.

CHAPTER XV

CANA AND NAZARETH

“**B**EFORE Jesus reaches his new home at Capernaum he illustrates the blessing of a victorious faith,” said Mrs. Brown as they gathered again about the study table. “As he went through the towns and villages of Galilee he came to Cana, where he had wrought his first miracle. Here a nobleman from Capernaum met him, having heard that Jesus had returned from Judea. He had journeyed some eighteen miles searching for the great physician to hasten to his home to heal his dying son. Jesus said, ‘Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.’ The nobleman said to Jesus, ‘Sir, come down ere my child die.’ Jesus then said, ‘Go thy way ; thy son liveth.’ The man trusted his word and went back to Capernaum. Before he reached his house his servants met him and said, ‘Thy son liveth.’ The nobleman asked when his son began to amend, and they told him that it was at one o’clock the day before. The man remembered that that was the exact hour when Jesus had spoken the word.

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“We see, again, how faith relieves the mind from worry and rests the body. This nobleman could have reached home the same day, had he hastened, but he believed Jesus and so tarried all night by the way to get his needed rest. He could sleep now because he trusted the Master’s word. What a load of crushing anxiety dropped! He trusted both his son and his soul in the care of Jesus.

“‘According to your faith be it unto you,’ was the lesson Jesus always taught. He is teaching that lesson still. The man had heard much from his neighbors about Jesus’ healing the sick. Jesus said to him, ‘But you will not now trust me unless you see a miracle.’ The nobleman said, ‘I do not ask to see anything. Come down that my son may not die!’ Faith was the victor.

“But in that tour of Galilee Jesus came soon to Nazareth where no faith greeted him,” continued the leader. “Doubt begets jealousy and malice. Jesus was always teaching by opposites. Cana and Nazareth, only six miles apart, were in one sense the distance of the tropics from the poles; faith is a genial sun that ripens abundant harvests, while doubt is cold and dark and destructive. Jesus, just from Samaria where a sinful woman believed and gladdened a whole city by her faith, and

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from Cana where the honorable nobleman trusted his word with childlike confidence, must meet banishment from Nazareth that we might see how doubt dooms souls and cities.

“He came to Nazareth where he had been brought up ; and as was his custom he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath. They gave him the book, and he turned to Isaiah and read the prophecy of the coming Messiah, how he should preach good tidings to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives, heal the broken-hearted, restore sight to the blind, and preach the acceptable year of the Lord. Then he said to them, ‘This day is this scripture fulfilled. But you are saying : Show us a sign ; do the things that we have heard that you are doing in Capernaum and elsewhere. ‘But,’ said Jesus, ‘it has always been since the days of Elijah that blessings come to those who believe.’

“Then they were enraged, and led Jesus to the brow of the hill, intending to cast him down headlong. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way to Capernaum. For one brief moment they caught some vision of his majesty that overawed them, and he passed on unharmed. No miracle or healing or believing convert is recorded there after this, because of their unbelief.”

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George Bancroft sat through this lesson with a very unhappy mind. For a week past he had been tempted and had gone back to Mr. Blanchard, his old skeptical friend, for consolation. In fact, at times he thought of taking some course that would shock Fannie Brown, from mere jealousy that she seemed so independent of himself in all her happiness. He envied Avery his calm, restful countenance and complete fellowship with all these surroundings. But envy was ready to burst into hate, and now his feelings were like the troubled sea whose waves cast up mire and dirt. As Mrs. Brown went on picturing the Saviour going with great blessing wherever faith opened a door for his coming, and then portrayed the murderous spirit that doubt and envy brought, George almost trembled at his peril. Fannie Brown sat opposite. Her eye caught signs of the conflict of his soul in his pale face and knit brow. She felt that the crisis had come. All her sympathies were aroused.

“Mother,” said Fannie, “do you think Jesus ever visited Nazareth again after they led him to the brow of the hill to cast him down?”

“It is difficult to tell,” said Mrs. Brown, “whether Mark speaks of a later visit to Nazareth when he tells us that Jesus could do no

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mighty works there and marveled because of their unbelief. Some think that he never came to Nazareth again. But there was a last visit. Perhaps it was this. Fannie, please read these lines from Farrar."

Fannie read the marked paragraph with a tender pathos in her voice : " ' And so he left them, never apparently to return again ; never, if we are right in the view here taken, to preach in their little synagogue. Did any feelings of merely human regret weigh down his soul while he was wending his weary steps down the steep hill-slope toward Cana of Galilee ? Did any tear start in his eyes unbidden as he stood, perhaps for the last time, to gaze from thence upon the rich plain, and on the purple heights of Carmel ? Were there any from whom he grieved to be severed, in the green, secluded valley where his manhood had labored and his childhood had played ? We know only that henceforth other friends awaited him away from boorish Nazareth, and that henceforth his home, so far as he had a home, was in the little city of Capernaum, beside the sunlit waters of the Galilean lake. ' "

" Yes," said Mrs. Brown, " this may have been his last visit to Nazareth when he preached that most touching of all his sermons in their synagogue, and they drove him forever from

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their midst. Perhaps he came once more. But doubt still barred the doors against him. And yet doubt is only want of faith. It is the night with the sun gone down."

Fannie was again looking at George. As he caught her gaze of sympathy, his jealous madness was overawed, somewhat as that look of the innocent Christ cast a spell over the enraged Nazarenes when they stood on the brow of the hill.

Then George turned to the leader and said, "Mrs. Brown, what is faith? It seems all dark to me."

"It is only doing what the nobleman did, George," she answered; "it is simply taking Jesus at his word. But in its effects it is everything, because faith puts our lives under Christ's protecting care and gives us a sweet sense of his presence. Christ went down from Nazareth on that weary journey, and when he came upon the shore of the sea of Galilee he saw Andrew and Peter casting their net. He called them, saying, 'Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.' They had been with Jesus enough to know what that meant; so they immediately left all and followed him. George, you ask, What is faith? That was real faith, when they walked out at the bidding of Jesus to do his will.

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“How much Jesus needed friends as he came down from Nazareth that day ! But he is hungering for friendship now, just as then. When these men of our town reject Jesus, he walks out alone and calls for those he has a right to expect will be his friends. Shall they too refuse to hear his voice ? Faith is another name for friendship. It links two in loving companionship. Jesus went a little farther and saw James and John mending their nets ; and he called them also, and immediately they left all and followed him. They teach us what faith means. It is trusting one’s life in his care and promptly following where he leads.”

As the lesson closed Avery was obliged to hasten back to be ready for any calls the night might bring. The evening’s lesson had been just what he needed. His faith had led him from home, and his eye had been so constantly on Jesus as he went from place to place, that he seemed to be living now in Capernaum, and was ready for any call that might come.

George went immediately to his room. He had lost the bitterness of the past few days, for during the lesson he felt that he had been borne along by evil impulses much as the men at Nazareth. He was frightened when he thought what feelings he had cherished. There was now a new conflict between his old pride

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and an awakened conscience. It was a deeper struggle than he had before known. He too could almost hear the voice of Jesus as he walked along the shore, calling the fishermen to leave all and follow him.

He at last dropped into a troubled sleep and dreamed that he had joined with a company of unbelievers who had led Jesus to the brow of the quarry back of the town, where they were about to hurl him down the rocks, when the Saviour gave them such a look of injured innocence and grieved majesty that they stood paralyzed, and Jesus passed out of his sight. He awakened with a deep conviction that his feelings of desperation the past week had been very much akin to his dream. He arose from his bed, dressed, and quietly went out upon the street, thinking a walk would quiet his excited nerves. As he saw the hills beyond the town, he felt a profound satisfaction that his dream had not been a reality. Yet his thoughts would follow the scene in Christ's life when he left Nazareth to go down to Capernaum where other friends welcomed him to their homes. He could not rid himself of the impression that he had been associated some way with rejecting Jesus, and that the Saviour was passing away to find other friends.

He recalled Fannie Brown's anxious ques-

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tion in the lesson, "Did Jesus ever visit Nazareth again after they led him to the brow of the hill?" He remembered her mother's reply, "It is difficult to tell; some think he never came to Nazareth again!" George stopped and looked down the valley, as if he could see Jesus in the distance moving away never to return. "Is this a reality, or am I still dreaming?" he said to himself.

Just then he heard a carriage coming in the opposite direction. He turned and saw Avery and the doctor driving rapidly. They turned upon another street before reaching him. He walked after them for a short distance till he was quite sure he saw the carriage standing in front of Mr. Blanchard's. Thus awakened from his reverie, he went back to his own home and quietly sought his couch again. He felt assured that some new events were occurring as real as those when Jesus walked this earth.

CHAPTER XVI

WELCOMED HOME

IN the few days that Avery Blanchard had been in the doctor's home he had been so faithful and obliging as to win the love of every member of the family. He had scarcely been absent a moment, except to recite his lessons in the forenoon, during all the ten days. While absent that evening with Mrs. Brown's class, they had spoken of what a treasure this faithful boy was in their household. And when he returned, Mrs. Sinnett and the children, as well as the doctor, greeted him so cordially that Avery forgot the sadness that had oppressed him on the way while thinking that he had been driven from his own home.

"Avery," said Mrs. Sinnett, "while you have been gone, I have been thinking that, as we have all become so much attached to you, it does not seem right for you to lodge in the coachman's room, out in the barn. So you are to take the room just back of the office, called the assistant's room. You are now to be one of the family, and I hope you may be with us many years."

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So unexpected was this greeting that Avery was touched to tears. In a moment he replied, "You are very kind ; but my room is good enough and better than I deserve. While there is so much sickness and so many night calls I can better serve the doctor by lodging at the barn." He was thinking of that weary journey of Jesus when rejected from Nazareth, as he went down to Capernaum. So vivid was the impression the lesson had left that Avery felt just as if his Saviour was that very night on the lonely walk ; and he did not want a better room for himself until he knew how Christ fared in his new home.

That very midnight he was called to drive the doctor quickly to see his own father. The *grippe* had turned to typhoid pneumonia, and Mr. Blanchard was in a very critical condition. His sickness touched the hearts of all the little circle of friends that had been meeting in the Bancroft library, but none more than that of George. Only three days before that sudden illness, as we have seen, he had gone back to Mr. Blanchard for new infidel arguments that he might vex the friends who were so interested in his own conversion.

It was now nearing Christmas. Mrs. Brown was preparing to make the meeting of her class on Christmas Eve, the next week, a return to

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the Bethlehem scenes, giving the children some tableaux of the wise men, the shepherds, the angel songs, etc. But their minds were all so anxious about Mr. Blanchard, that they were not in the mood to enter into the preparations. Every day Mrs. Brown dropped in to aid Mrs. Blanchard and encourage her to hope that some blessing was to come out of the affliction. The banker went often to watch a part of the night with his old neighbor who had so isolated himself for many years. He also secured an experienced nurse at his own expense to take the entire care.

When Christmas Eve came the class met, drawn together both by their mutual interest in Mr. Blanchard and their growing desire to follow the Christ after his rejection from Nazareth. Avery came and reported that the doctor said that the typhoid symptoms had abated and that Mr. Blanchard was no longer delirious, but that the lungs were in such condition as to leave little hope of recovery.

“Then,” said Mrs. Brown, “suppose we have a short lesson to-night, following Jesus on to Capernaum. The life of Christ for the next few days may give us just the faith we need for our anxious minds. In our last lesson we saw the Saviour after that lonely walk of twenty-four miles from Nazareth to the sea near Ca-

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pernaum, meeting four of the disciples as they were fishing, and hailing them as henceforth 'fishers of men.' You can almost see the five walk together along the shore, planning wider work.

"The next day was the Sabbath. It was a busy day with Jesus. In the morning he went with the people to the synagogue. After the Scripture lesson Jesus taught the people with such earnestness and power that they were astonished, for he spoke as one that had authority.

"Into the synagogue had come a man that was possessed of evil spirits ; and he cried out, or rather the demons in the man, 'Thou Jesus of Nazareth, art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.' Then Jesus commanded the unclean spirits to come out of him. And the people were amazed when they saw the man calm and in his right mind. At the close of the services the excited conversation of those returning to their homes passed from lips to lips until the whole region was stirred to see Jesus and have him heal their friends.

"Jesus was first taken to the home where Peter's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and they sought his healing. Then Jesus, in the presence of the four disciples who were now to

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be with him seeking to save men, took the sick woman by the hand, and immediately the fever left her, and she prepared their meal. By the time the sun was setting crowds returned from all parts of the city, bringing the diseased, especially those possessed with devils, and a great company were healed."

"Are people now possessed with evil spirits like these men in Christ's time?" asked one of the class.

"It would seem," replied the leader, "that there was an outer manifestation of the power of evil spirits, as seen in their bodily afflictions, that is not generally permitted since the age when the gospel was established. During the days of Christ's earthly mission, spirits subject to the evil one exercised a direct influence over the souls and bodies of certain men, that the world might learn two great lessons. What are these lessons?"

They all sat a moment in silent thought. Then said Fannie, "It shows us that Jesus is stronger than all our worst enemies, if we put ourselves under his control."

"Yes," said Mrs. Brown, "it put the power of Jesus so plainly before the eyes of the people that they had no excuse for rejecting him as a teacher come from God. When his enemies accused him of doing these works through the

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power of Beelzebub, Jesus could reply, 'How can Satan cast out Satan!' No one thing could so powerfully appeal to their minds that he came as a divine Saviour to bless the world, as his casting out evil spirits. But there is still another reason why demons were allowed this control of men at that age when God's word was being prepared for our study. Think a moment; does it not occur to you?"

Then Avery Blanchard, whose thoughts had been going back to the wild associations that came so near ruining him the past summer, said: "Mrs. Brown, don't you think that evil now sometimes leads us so far into thoughtless sin, that when we come to ourselves we seem to have acted just like these men with the evil spirits?"

"Exactly," said the leader; "the men possessed with devils were great object-lessons for our study. They show us that all sin is an alliance with Satan, and that it tends to bind us hand and foot in the power of the evil one. The Saviour has come to deliver us from becoming just such spiritual wrecks! There is a verse of an old hymn that comes to me:

"How far may we go on in sin?

How long does God forbear?

Where does hope end, and where begin

The confines of despair?

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“How ready Jesus was to redeem these men from this awful bondage ! Yet the next morning when the crowds came, he had already retired to a place of secret prayer. When messengers found him and told of the multitudes seeking him, he replied, ‘I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also ; for therefore am I sent.’ Then he went and called his disciples from their fishing again, saying to Peter, ‘Henceforth thou shalt catch men.’ Then after, or possibly just before, calling Matthew, the tax-gatherer, to leave the receipt of custom in Capernaum, he spent three busy months in a general tour of Galilee preaching the kingdom and calling men to forsake sin, more anxious to save men than to heal them. Thus we come to the second Passover when he begins another year of public teaching at Jerusalem. This first has been the year of rejection from Nazareth and welcome to homes of ever-faithful friends at Capernaum. What effect did it have upon Jesus’ work to be driven from Nazareth ? ”

“It gave him new friends and wider opportunity to do good,” was readily answered.

“Yes,” said the leader ; “and with cheerful spirit the Saviour took up the increasing toil, though Nazareth had driven him away in lonely sorrow.”

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As it was Christmas Eve they decided to shorten the lesson for special conversation on their peculiar circumstances. Avery Blanchard had not seen his father, realizing that he must wait until this was asked by the sick man. The new turn of the disease, leaving him with a few days of clear mind if he must die, gave Mrs. Brown strong hope that prayer had been answered. She said to the little company :

“Before we separate let us bow together, asking our Saviour to give us opportunity to show his loving favor to our sick friend in such a way that Christ may be seen in us. Jesus visits the homes of the sick now by using his disciples who go in his name.”

So vividly had they all seen Christ blessing the sick in Capernaum, that they felt themselves now near his power. They believed that faith could put their sick friend in the care of Jesus and rest assured of his direct guidance. Tender and trusting were the prayers of the leader and of the young Christians who followed. They went out from that room confident that Christ would use them.

That evening Mr. Blanchard asked his wife what had happened. She told him of his severe sickness, his burning fever and consequent stupor, and that Lyman Bancroft had been much with him and had now provided

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this trained nurse, that Mrs. Brown had been daily assisting her in the kitchen, preparing poultices and giving encouragement. The sick man was deeply moved by the kindness of these friends whom he had been bitter in denouncing as hypocrites only a few days before. He did not reply, but Mrs. Blanchard wiped away the tears that stood upon his pale cheeks.

The next morning when the doctor came the sick man asked after Avery.

“He is in our home,” said the physician, “and I do not know what I should have done without him during the past two weeks, for I have been called day and night. Avery always asks after you, Mr. Blanchard. He is a son of whom you may well feel proud.”

The sick man whispered that he would like to see his son.

“Certainly ; he will be delighted, if it is your request,” replied the doctor.

When Avery returned from his recitations, he came at once to the office to inquire concerning his father.

The doctor said : “He is perfectly rational. He inquired for you, and asked if he might see you. After dinner you may drive me there, and if he is no worse, I will leave you to spend a little time with him.”

Avery then went to his room in the barn, to

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be alone for a few minutes. He could have no idea whether his father would insist that he should now yield his faith and return ; but he thought of Mrs. Brown's prayer the evening before, "that opportunity now be given for Christ to be seen in us!" At the hour he went and was welcomed by his father.

CHAPTER XVII

BETHESDA

BARTON BROWN had never missed a lesson since this study commenced. He had passed on quietly from week to week, never revealing his deepest inner thoughts to any one. He cared little now for associating with other boys. He never sat down at home without a book, and was soon lost in its pages to all that surrounded him. He carried home two or three volumes from the town library every week, and often spent an hour canvassing the Bancroft shelves. Yet he never asked to be excused from the study of the Christ. In any review he could trace the journeys of the Saviour, as far as the lessons had gone, with the most perfect memory. But "Mounting Heavenward" was not yet his professed motto. His mother and sister sought to make home pleasant for him, avoided stirring his temper as far as possible, and waited hopefully for his grasping the ladder.

George Bancroft's pride in self had been quite shocked of late, yet he did not reach the point of surrender. "The World's Parlia-

ment of Religions," in two excellent volumes, had just been added to his father's library. He read the addresses of distinguished men of all religions with great interest. He followed the papers on Confucianism, by the secretary of the Chinese legation, with much enthusiasm. Pung Kwang Yu showed a personal pride in his own theories that made him of kin spirit to George. His adroitness in transferring the principles of the Christian religion back to the great Chinese teacher, and in making Christ and Plato and Confucius founders of kindred schools of religious philosophy worthy of like admiration, gave George new food for his doubts. He took pleasure in reading the statement of this Chinese official that he had been in the public service of the government for nearly thirty years ; he could not therefore be the royal youth of like name who was the pupil of Mrs. Brown a dozen years ago, though he did prove to be a relative.

With the beginning of the new year they met for another lesson. "It happens," said Mrs. Brown, "that our New Year's Eve lesson is the beginning of a new year in Christ's ministry. Here John tells us that there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. It was his second Passover and marks a new era in his teaching."

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Then they took their Bibles and studied the fifth chapter of John, to see how the second year of Christ's public ministry began.

"How did Jesus begin his mission as a teacher come from God at Jerusalem one year before?" inquired Mrs. Brown.

"By cleansing the temple, foretelling his death and resurrection, and teaching Nicodemus the necessity of men being 'born again,' " answered Barton, whose retentive memory recalled at once the lesson of Jesus at the first Passover of his ministry.

"Yes, a clean soul and a pure life," said Mrs. Brown, "was the great lesson that Jesus taught through all that first year which he began by cleansing the temple; for that you remember was the 'white thread,' the pure human life, then woven into his mission. But now he began the second year at Jerusalem at the pool of Bethesda. The Jews, there and then, decided to kill him because he said also that 'God was his father, making himself equal with God.' There he began that new era in his teaching with these words, 'that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father.' This, you remember, was the 'blue thread' year into which Jesus wove everywhere the thought that he was the Son of God."

George Bancroft was now listening carefully,

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for he had determined to speak this evening of his new notions gathered from the Parliament of Religions. His way seemed blocked now by this new and positive teaching of Jesus that he was the Son of God! He had the new books lying on the table before him, all pencil-marked, ready to make his striking quotations that Jesus and Confucius and Plato were alike great philosophers. He had felt sure that he could puzzle the teacher with his new wisdom.

“Bethesda, you know, means ‘house of mercy,’ ” said Mrs. Brown, “and furnished our Saviour a beautiful place at which to begin his new year, as he stood on one of its five porches. Nature has probably never furnished a more striking picture of Christ’s gospel of mercy, than this fountain of healing.”

“Why do you think it was a natural spring?” said Mr. Bancroft; “it has always seemed a mystery to me, this account of the pool of Bethesda.”

“Dr. Robinson, who spent many years in exploring the Holy Land, has thrown much light upon Bethesda,” said the leader. “He identifies this pool with the upper fountain of Siloam, which he found to be an intermittent spring which he himself saw bubbling up at times. Barton, will you read this description

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from Trench on the 'Miracle at Bethesda'?" Barton took the volume from his mother's hand and read these statements from Jerome, Prudentius, and early Christian scholars, as here quoted :

"'Siloam . . . which is not a perpetual spring, but bubbles up at certain seasons and days, coming with a great noise through hollows of the earth and caves of the hardest rock—the waters rapidly bubbling up in the basin of this fountain, and in a few minutes retreating again.' Another says, 'Siloam pours forth its waters at varying times, and does not gush with any constant flow, but on marked occasions the lake receives bountiful draughts. Crowds of feeble persons are devoured with thirsting hope of this covetous stream, waiting to wash away diseases of their limbs by swimming in its pure waters.'"

"These waters seemed to have healing properties for certain diseases," said Mrs. Brown. "But as they soon retreated to the caves below, the people watched anxiously for the flow. There are in some parts of the earth now such intermittent springs that have great healing effects. And I do not know of any

The pool of Bethesda has been discovered recently in the church of St. Anne, a spot quite distinct from Siloam [ED.].

Bethesda

better name for a house built at such a place than Bethesda, 'house of mercy.' "

"This shows me new beauty in this scripture," said the banker, "and I shall always link it with Jesus' second Passover and his beginning to teach plainly that he was the Son of God."

"This miracle at the 'house of mercy,' said the leader, "pointed out Jesus as the promised Messiah, called by the prophets, 'The sure mercies of David,' and by apostles, 'The merciful high priest in things pertaining to God.' The man who waited at the pool, helpless and friendless and despairing, was made whole by the word of our Lord. It was the Sabbath. Therefore the Jews persecuted Jesus for healing on the Sabbath. Jesus answered that his Father did deeds of mercy always, and therefore he, himself, did also. Then they plotted to put him to death, and never ceased till they nailed him to the cross, just two years afterward, and with this same charge as their only excuse, 'that he made himself equal to God.'

"He answered their charge now by appealing to three witnesses ; who were they ? "

They followed down this discourse of Jesus to his persecutors, and read that (1) John, "a burning and a shining light" bore witness,

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(2) "The works that I do bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me," (3) "The Father himself hath borne witness of me. . . Search the scriptures."

"These are the three kinds of witnesses that stand to-day : 'The shining light' Christians, or true disciples, that always proclaim Christ as their Saviour ; the work of the gospel in transforming the world to-day in his name ; and the unwavering testimony of the Scriptures that Jesus was the Son of God. Jesus announced, on that first day of the new era in his teaching, the very witnesses that appeal to us to-day to receive him as our Lord. These three witnesses agree and ought to convince every honest man."

George Bancroft was in utter confusion at this appeal to Christ's witnesses. He saw that Jesus made it a new phase of his teaching from this very hour.

"Notice," said Mrs. Brown, "from this Passover Jesus is closing almost every miracle, for a time at least, with an appeal to his divine glory foreshadowed. He often points to Moses and the prophets in their references to Messiah. He sometimes appeals to his disciples, 'Whom say ye that I am?'"

Then they followed Christ back to Galilee, for he did not tarry now in Judea. On the

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way, they saw him and his disciples encamped on the Sabbath near the wheat fields ; and being hungry they rubbed out a few grains in their hands for food. The Pharisees accused them of breaking the Sabbath. Jesus replied, "The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath."

"When they came to the sea of Tiberias," said Mrs. Brown, "great crowds from all parts of the land were following him, the diseased pressing up to touch him, if they might be healed. Unclean spirits fell down before him and cried saying, 'Thou art the Son of God.' But he charged the unclean spirits that they should not make him known, but let the Scriptures bear witness with his words and works that he was the promised one in whose name the Gentiles should trust. He is everywhere pressing upon them to trust him as the Son of God."

As they finished this lesson concerning Bethesda's marking a new era in the teaching of Jesus, and his appealing henceforth to his chosen witnesses that he was the Son of God, their thoughts turned to Mr. Blanchard, the sick neighbor, who had so long insisted that Jesus Christ was only a deluded man at most. They asked Avery, who had often been with him the past week, about the dying man's thoughts.

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“A great change is going on in father’s mind,” said Avery. “When he knew what Mr. Bancroft and Mrs. Brown and some other Christians had done for him, after all he had said against them, he asked to see me. I expected he would try to make me take a pledge not to come to this study, but when I went in he took me by the hand as he never had done before. He could not speak for a few minutes ; then he whispered, ‘Your new friends have been very kind to me ; how can they do this after all I have said ?’ I did not know what it was best to say, but I answered, ‘They have not said anything to me about it ; don’t you think it is because they are Christians, father ?’ He still held me by the hand and said, ‘My son, what do you know about this thing they call religion ? Have I been wrong all my life ?’

“Then I said, ‘Father, it has made a great change in my life since I began to study about Jesus and try to follow him ; I know I feel very different toward you and everybody else now. I can’t argue about it, but I know it has changed me all around from what I used to be. Doesn’t that prove, father, that I ought to hold tight to such a friend as that ?’ But father was too weak to talk more then ; so he lay holding my hand, with a tear on his

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cheek. Mother came in and wiped his face, and said, ‘Does it seem good to see our boy again?’ He made a slight movement of the lips, and the old cloud was gone from mother’s face. It seemed to me to-night when you said, Mrs. Brown, that Jesus had now three kinds of witnesses, his friends, his works, and his word, that father had received the witness of the friends of Jesus ; and I hope he will see the work of Jesus in my new life ; then I think he will be ready to listen to the other witness, the word of Jesus.’’

As this was New Year’s Eve, they adopted as a Scripture motto for the coming year the words of Jesus, “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” They separated with the hearty greeting, “A Happy New Year !”

CHAPTER XVIII

MOUNTAIN INSTRUCTION

THERE was a sacred awe thrown about this group of friends through these days, by their intimate relations with Mr. Blanchard who was lingering between two worlds. Doctor Sinnett honestly told him that his condition was very unfavorable to recovery. His mind was clear and his thoughts grasped the fact of a near eternity. He wanted to see Avery and Mr. Bancroft every day.

One would sit with him awhile in the morning and the other in the afternoon. Lyman Bancroft and Ira Blanchard had been intimate friends in their youth, but had afterward been widely separated in their tastes and associations for many years. The banker's great kindness to the sick man had swept away the barriers and restored the intimacy and affection of boyhood. Conversion had brought back the childlike spirit of youth to the one, and sickness and approaching death caused the other to live over again the days of hopefulness in the home of his Christian mother, when the two boys had been so much together.

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Avery sat with his hand clasped in his father's while he stayed in the room. He had the soothing touch of the true family physician, and now that he was permitted to watch with his dying father, he seemed to anticipate every little comfort without the asking. Both Avery and Mr. Bancroft were watchful of the man's whispered talk, seeking where they might drop a word concerning the rest of the soul in the merciful Saviour.

"Yes, but I am too weak to think much now—too late for me, I fear," said he one day as he held Avery's hand.

Then Avery told his father the story of Bethesda and the man helpless for thirty-eight years; but that Jesus only asked him if he really wished to be healed. "Why, father, it was because Jesus knew the man was such a bad cripple, and had been a long time in that way, that he cured him at once," said Avery. Then Mr. Blanchard asked his son to read that chapter to him. And Avery took his Testament from his pocket and began, saying, "Father, Bethesda means 'house of mercy,' and that is where Jesus began to tell the people plainly that he was the Son of God."

"My son, where did you learn that?" said Mr. Blanchard, turning over on his elbow and lifting his head.

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“This was our last lesson in the life of Jesus,” said Avery ; “and Mrs. Brown told us always to remember that Jesus as the Son of God standing at the ‘house of mercy’ showed both God’s power and love by healing a man who could do nothing but tell Jesus that he was helpless.”

Mr. Blanchard dropped his head back upon the pillow, exhausted by his effort. For a while he lay motionless as if passing away. In a few minutes he opened his eyes and whispered, “At the house of mercy ! At the house of mercy !”

“Yes, father, you believe now that Jesus came to show our Heavenly Father’s mercy, and to take us back with him to the heavenly mansions, don’t you ?”

“I believe it,” he answered, “while you read it and hold my hand ; but I have tried so long to argue myself out of it, that my old doubts come back and haunt me as soon as you and Lyman Bancroft are gone.”

Thus the struggle had gone on for the past week, the sick man getting some new encouraging thought from day to day, from these two young disciples, while trying to fight back the haunting phantoms of long-cherished doubts.

When the next lesson came Mr. Bancroft

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and Avery reported their experiences with the sick man, and that he had told them he was the helpless man at the 'house of mercy' ; for he said it had been thirty-eight years last December that he, a youth of eighteen, first read Paine's "Age of Reason," and gave himself up to his life of skepticism.

Said Mr. Bancroft, "Mrs. Brown, I have been successful in business and acquired what men in our village call a fortune, but nothing that I possess ever gave anything like the joy I had in being able to talk to Mr. Blanchard about Jesus at Bethesda. Our last lesson seemed to describe just his case, and he seemed the man that our Saviour had singled out ; and we were the few trembling disciples that were following Jesus about and watching his healing signs and mercies."

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Brown, "this is what we need, to see the Christ, who was dwelling in the flesh, now living with us. Instead of trying to transfer ourselves back to Judea and Galilee when the Word was made flesh, eighteen hundred years ago, let us be assured that he who then walked among men in the flesh, is now with us—the same Jesus speaking to us by the Spirit the very words that then fell from his lips. Mr. Bancroft, you and Avery have been with Jesus at Bethesda, the past week, as truly

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as were Peter and John at Jerusalem. This is the blessing of a careful and prayerful study of the life of Jesus."

Then they started along with the Master after his return to Galilee. They saw how cunning scribes and carping Pharisees from Judea were following him as spies, since he had clearly announced his divine character. He entered a synagogue and met a man with a withered hand. These critics were watching to see what Jesus would do. So the Lord read their inner thoughts and told them what they were thinking. Then he healed the withered hand, though it was the Sabbath, saying, "What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep?" But these Pharisees went out and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.

Then said Mrs. Brown: "In those days, early in the second year, and soon after he began this new era of teaching, he withdrew seven miles back from Capernaum to Mount Hattin where he chose twelve disciples whom he called apostles, meaning special missionaries, who were to be constantly with Jesus, receive his instructions, witness his miracles

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and all the facts of his death and resurrection, and who should then be able to proclaim a complete gospel to others, and by inspiration of the Holy Spirit make faithful record of his life and mission for our study.''

Then the class looked at these twelve men, and saw that six of them were those first chosen companions who, a year and a half ago, came with Jesus from the Jordan and were with him to witness the first miracle at Cana, the home of Nathanael, who was also called Bartholomew, one of the Twelve. So that the chief of the apostles had been with Jesus from his baptism in the Jordan, except Matthew, the tax-gatherer, who in the streets of Capernaum had left all to follow him only a few weeks before the apostles were chosen.

"Jesus spent the night before in prayer in this mountain," said Mrs. Brown, "and early in the morning the Twelve came, no doubt by previous appointment, to receive their special instructions. Here Jesus stands forth clearly as the great teacher come from God. To Matthew, who had so recently become a disciple, it marked the beginning of Christ's public teaching. Hence when he wrote his Gospel he recorded this sermon immediately after the temptation, because it stood out in Matthew's mind as the first great sermon in

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his own memory, and because this 'Sermon on the Mount' was always to stand out as distinguishing Jesus Christ as the divine teacher who here announced that in himself the law and the prophets were fulfilled."

Then they took up the Sermon on the Mount, to study its great seed thoughts. "Here you will see," said the leader, "that we still go up into the mountain when we receive these teachings of our Saviour. The Beatitudes, or the conditions of mind and heart that make the true disciple blessed and happy, however poor and persecuted, mark clearly the change from the law of Moses to the grace of Christ."

"What is the last word of the Old Testament?" said Mrs. Brown.

They turned to the Bible, and one replied, "Curse."

"And what is the first word of this mountain sermon that Christ uttered to his disciples?"

"Blessed," was the reply.

"This," said the leader, "gives the distinguishing change from the law to the gospel. Christ came to redeem us from the cursings of a broken law, and to introduce us into the blessings of his grace."

Then the class were asked to notice the

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things that Jesus lifts up, in this mountain instruction, that have enriched the world ; “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which persecute you.” “This,” said Mrs. Brown, “stands alone in the teachings of our Saviour, as marking a new era in the world when Jesus and his disciples breathed its spirit.

“And what else from this sermon is known wherever the gospel has gone?” was asked. “Yes, here was first uttered the Lord’s Prayer, that rises from millions of hearts in every corner of the earth, and will remain to the end of the world our Saviour’s guide to the things we should ever ask in daily prayer.

“What common sin,” said Mrs. Brown, “does Jesus warn against in this sermon—a sin that corrupts good manners and that was marked as great guilt in the Ten Commandments?”

They were not long in answering, “The sin of profanity.”

“Let us read these words carefully ; for our Saviour pleads so tenderly and earnestly against every form of swearing and by-words, that we need all to seal our lips to idle oaths that blaspheme sacred names. How much every young man needs to go often up into

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the mountain with Christ, that he may guard against this vile habit !”

Then they found in the Sermon on the Mount, “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them,” the Golden Rule, that great principle which underlies all true relations to others and is essential to peace and prosperity. “Why, this law given here by our Saviour,” said Mrs. Brown, “sweeps throughout all human relations as the law of gravitation through the natural world. It cannot be violated without pain and sorrow. If it were everywhere perfectly kept, it would banish wars, prohibit strikes, prevent quarrels, and bring the universal brotherhood of man. It is Jesus’ gift to the world in the Sermon on the Mount.”

“Notice,” continued Mrs. Brown, “that Jesus uttered these great truths as the Lord of heaven and earth. He is careful here to lift their thoughts to the great judgment day. He says, ‘Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord !’ He insists that he will be on the throne of the universe, in the day of final reward.

“In the mountain sermon, from the first word, ‘blessed,’ to the fall of the ‘house built upon the sand,’ there is the voice of one from above, and therefore this discourse binds

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together the Old Testament and the New, as the one book of God. Truly he went up into the mountain of highest spiritual vision, on the day of its utterance. It towers high above all human productions. Let us close this lesson with the testimony of Daniel Webster. Will George please read this statement ? ”

The following inscription was in brief, Mr. Webster’s confession of faith, or testimony in favor of Christianity. It was dictated by Mr. Webster a fortnight before his death, and may now be read on his monument :

Lord, I believe ; help thou mine unbelief.
Philosophical
argument, especially
that drawn from the vastness of
the universe, in comparison with the
apparent insignificance of this globe, has
sometimes shaken my reason for the faith
which is in me ; but my heart has always assured
and reassured me that the gospel of Jesus Christ
must be a divine reality. The Sermon
on the Mount cannot be a merely human
production. This belief enters into
the very depth of my conscience.
The whole history of
man proves it.

CHAPTER XIX

RAISING THE DEAD

THE sick man waited anxiously day by day for the short calls allowed by the physician to Avery and Mr. Bancroft. They seemed always to come from a visit to the Christ. The evening lessons of Jesus in Galilee had so much in common with their own experiences and the longings of the dying doubter, that they thought and spoke of the Saviour as walking now in their own town. Mr. Blanchard seemed to gain victory over his haunting doubts while he held the hand of either of these two who had come in touch with the Man of Galilee.

When they were gone he seemed to himself to be in conflict with evil spirits. He asked Avery one day to read the account of the men possessed with devils. When he came to the demons crying out, "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God——" "That's it, that's it!" said Mr. Blanchard. "I am tormented with a legion of fierce doubts that leave no peace as they once did; they raise a tumult in my soul; and then I

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hear voices crying out, 'Jesus, thou Son of God, torment us not !' But when you come and hold my hand, this tumult is gone !''

Avery thought how often he had read of Jesus taking people by the hand, and said to his father, "You may take the hand of Jesus, and he will stay with you all the time." That evening Avery saw a few verses in a religious paper that he clipped out to read to his father. The next day when he called, Mr. Blanchard at once whispered, "Yes, hold my hand—how good it feels !" Then Avery read to him of Jesus taking a blind man by the hand and leading him along the way and putting his hands at last on his eyes, and the man saw clearly.

"Now, father," said Avery, "I found this prayer, last night, of one who felt just as you do. His little child was frightened in the storm one dark night, until it took the father's hand ; then it dropped asleep without any fear. As that father's soul was full of doubts and darkness, he then turned to the Lord and prayed :

" Hold thou my hands ! .

In grief and joy, in hope and fear,
Lord, let me *feel* that thou art near,
Hold thou my hands !

" If e'er by doubts

Of thy good fatherhood depressed,

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I cannot find in thee my rest,
Hold thou my hands !

“ And when at length,
With darkened eyes and fingers cold,
I seek some loving hand to hold
Hold thou my hands ! ”

“ Read that again,” said Mr. Blanchard. Slowly and tenderly Avery read the lines over. “ Once more, my son,” whispered the sick man, as the tears ran down his pale face ; “ read slowly, that I may catch its words.” Then he repeated several lines with closed eyes,

“ Lord, let me *feel* that thou art near,
Hold thou my hands ! ”

Then the sick man, completely exhausted by his long effort to grasp and hold all these lines, dropped into a most restful sleep, and Avery left him in the hands of the watchful nurse.

That night the class met in the Bancroft library. They followed Jesus with his disciples and the surging crowds back from Mount Hattin to Capernaum. They read with new interest the account of the centurion, the commander-in-chief of the Roman army at that important post, beseeching Jesus that he would heal his dying servant.

“ Notice,” said the leader. “ that this man

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heartily acknowledged the divine character of Jesus, calling him Lord, and saying that he himself with all his authority as commander of armies, was not worthy that Jesus should come under his roof, but asked him only to speak the word, and the servant would be healed ! Now, observe what Jesus said to the people, 'I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel !' and to the centurion he said, 'Go thy way ; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.' And the servant was at once healed. Humble faith in him as the Son of God was here lifted up for their careful study.

"As he journeyed, all his works and words were leading their thoughts up to this same trust. The next day they journeyed to south Galilee, and we see Jesus with his disciples and many people coming to Nain, twenty-five miles southwest from Capernaum."

Now they were to study Christ as they had not seen him before—raising the dead ! "Though he healed multitudes, with all forms of disease," said Mrs. Brown, "only three times did he bring dead people back to life, and always when the faith of special friends was being overtaxed."

That they might see clearly these facts of resurrection, they were asked to study carefully

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the circumstances of the three cases. "It would seem to be the day that Jesus came to Nain," said the leader, "that messengers came from John the Baptist in prison asking new proof that Jesus was the true Messiah. It was only a few days before John was to be slain. He was passing through those last trying scenes when he needed for himself and for his disciples special faith. When these two messengers arrived Jesus was touched into tenderest sympathy for his friend and forerunner, and in the same hour cured many of various diseases and gave blind men their sight.

"Just then a funeral procession was passing out the city gate. It was the only son of a widow. Jesus spoke to her to weep not. He who could see into her broken heart, needed not that she make her plea in words, so he came and touched the bier. The very pause of the procession was an act of faith more expressive than any words ; hence Jesus said, 'Young man, I say unto thee, arise.' And the man sat up, and Jesus presented him to his mother. And the whole company glorified God.

"After this Jesus told the messengers to go back and tell John what they had seen, how 'The blind receive their sight, the lame walk,

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the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.' It thus seemed a time when Jesus desired to send to John in prison this crowning evidence that the promised Messiah had come."

Then they examined the records and found that only a few days afterward Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus at Capernaum. "There was here another peculiar appeal to Jesus," said Mrs. Brown. "Not only the ruler of the synagogue, who believed on Jesus amidst much opposition of his associates, boldly came to Christ and fell at his feet worshiping him and pleading that he should come to save the dying child with the touch of his hand—not only this marked faith appealed to the Saviour; but Jesus was about to send out the twelve on their first tour of preaching. The Master knew how much they needed their faith strengthened. Hence he took three of the leaders, Peter, James, and John, into the house where the daughter was now dead. And he took her by the hand, and said, 'Maid, arise.' And her spirit came again, and she arose immediately. Then he called the Twelve together and sent them out, two and two, to preach the kingdom of God. How wonder-

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fully he had now equipped their faith for this new mission !”

Then they turned to the last scene, but a few days before his crucifixion, when Lazarus was raised at Bethany. “The opposition to Jesus was growing so fierce,” said the leader, “that his disciples needed their faith girded more than ever ; so Jesus called back Lazarus after he had been four days in the grave. The sisters had sent word to Jesus that Lazarus was sick. After two days Jesus prepared to go to the Bethany friends. The disciples, knowing that the Jews were preparing to kill the Master, plead with him not to go. Then Jesus told them plainly that Lazarus was dead ; but said he to them, ‘I am glad that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe.’ So we see that the faith of the disciples was again beginning to falter. To give them new trust for the awful days hastening, as well as to prepare the Bethany friends for standing firm, he called Lazarus from the very corruption of the grave ! Thus he was declared to be the Son of God with power at three different times when it was a crisis in the faith of his special friends.”

As they sat studying these scenes, they saw not only the power of the Son of God manifested, but also the love of Jesus as a friend.

Raising the Dead

They observed that it was the widow's only son, Jairus' only daughter, and the sisters' only brother, that were raised. Thus the affection and sympathy of the Saviour, as he mingled his compassion and tears with those of sorrowing friends, thrilled their hearts anew. In all their lessons they had never seen so much of the divine power and the tender friendship of Jesus united as here.

They were watching the dying skeptic from day to day with such intense interest that Christ coming in touch with their own experience drew them very close to this lesson. As Avery left the library he called to spend a little time with his mother in the kitchen, where he often went in the evening, of late, to carry some comfort, and to be near by in any emergency.

"Your father has been more restful since you were here to-day," said Mrs. Blanchard. "I went in this afternoon as he was waking, and he repeated slowly,

' With darkened eyes and fingers cold,
I seek some loving hand to hold,
Hold thou my hands ! '

I thought he was delirious and near death. I took his hand and said, 'Yes, I am here.' Then he looked at me and whispered, 'I was

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saying Avery's prayer.' He closed his eyes again and prayed, over and over,

'Lord, let me *feel* that thou art near,
Hold thou my hands !'

And while I sat with him he dropped into another peaceful sleep."

A day or two afterward Mr. Blanchard asked the doctor if he might not see George Bancroft. It was arranged. The skeptic's sudden illness just after their last private interview had so stunned George that he had not since revealed his inner feelings to any one. It was with great surprise that he received the message to visit the dying man.

CHAPTER XX

NEW TEACHING

WHEN George Bancroft entered the sick man's room he was much affected. It seemed to him that he was standing in the very presence of death. The low whisper, the sunken eyes, and the pallid face, at once dismissed all thought of resuming their old discussions. In a moment all George's skeptical notions which had bolstered his pride abandoned him. Before coming he had thought that some of his new speculations gathered from the Parliament of Religions might be used to comfort his skeptical friend. But now the very sight of the yearning countenance of this dying man disarmed him.

Mr. Blanchard took his hand and whispered, "George, strength gone—can say only few words—'Only one book for a dying man.' My old notions can't face death—all failed me. George, forgive me, trying to lead you astray—Couldn't die, without seeing you. I wickedly sinned—oh, that awful sin!—Religion, a reality—I know by Avery's change—and the kindness of these Christians—after all I abused

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them—I pray for mercy—Don't neglect—don't trifle——”

Here his strength failed, and exhausted by the great effort he fell back with closed eyes and gasped for breath. George felt that he had received a message from one crossing the threshold of eternity, and it was very different teaching from that of former interviews. He called the nurse, who raised the sick man's head, chafed his hands, and gave him a stimulant, and life rallied again, but he was not able to speak. George silently left and walked to his own home. He went to his room and took from his desk a paper which he had been writing for the past few weeks on “The Unity of all Religions, and the New Church of Humanity Universal!” He had gathered many speculations from his late readings that were new to him, and he had been looking forward anxiously to Mr. Blanchard's recovery that he might read this paper to him and have his approval.

But his essay had now lost its charm. As he glanced down his carefully written pages he came to this quotation: “But what then about sin? Sin as a theological imputation will perhaps drop out of the vocabulary of this larger communion of the righteous. As a weakness to be overcome, as an imperfection

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to be laid aside, man will simply be reminded of his shortcomings. Religion will lift man above his weaknesses by reminding him of his responsibilities. The goal before is Paradise." He looked again, "Sin will perhaps drop out of the vocabulary!" Then he thought of the dying man's utterance a few moments before, "I have wickedly sinned." "Ah," thought George, "the conscience of a dying man will not let sin drop out." Then that last broken sentence, as Mr. Blanchard swooned away, "Don't trifle," came back like a voice from the other side; and George Bancroft said within himself, "That notion can't face death, either," and he took his pen and wrote on the margin of that paragraph of his paper, "False!"

He looked upon the next page and found another quotation, "Will this new faith have its bible? It retains all the old bibles of mankind, words of Jesus and of Buddha alike, but gives them a new luster. Religion is not a question of literature, but of life. God's revelation is continuous, not contained in tablets of stone or sacred parchment." Then George recalled Mr. Blanchard's whisper of Walter Scott's last words, "There is only one book for a dying man." Again he said to himself, "This theory cannot face death, for

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it was what Mr. Blanchard was always teaching." He took the paper on which he had spent so much time and care and in which he had centered all his pride, tore it to bits and threw it in the waste-basket. He sat in a surprised daze, as a man might when a sudden flood arises and washes away all his possessions.

The lesson evening came. All were again present. The leader announced the theme, "New Teaching." They followed Jesus back from Nain, where he raised the widow's son, to Capernaum. They noticed the invitation there to dine at the Pharisee's house, where the sinful woman came in and washed the feet of Jesus with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and anointed his feet with precious ointment.

"The Pharisee," said Mrs. Brown, "thought within himself, 'Jesus does not know what sort of a woman this is, or he would not permit this act.' Then Jesus answered the man's thoughts, to show that he as the Son of God could read the inner heart. There and then Jesus uttered his first parable, which afterward became his chosen way of instruction. Here is the beginning of new teaching, new as to the forgiveness of great sins and as to sins that have no forgiveness, as well as the new form of parable teaching.

New Teaching

“Now, what is a parable?” asked the leader. They thought for a moment and seemed puzzled for language to express it.

Then Amelia, the youngest, said, “Earthly words with a heavenly meaning.”

“Yes, Amelia, I do not think a better definition can be found,” said Mrs. Brown. “It is just that, earthly words, or an account of things as they happen every day, in which there is a deeper thought of spiritual things. It was only a few days after this first parable that Jesus came back to Capernaum and taught by the seaside in parables altogether, beginning with, ‘a sower went forth to sow,’ and following with the mustard seed, the leaven, the parable of the tares, treasure hid in a field, the pearl of great price, the net cast into the sea—the seven parables which some have thought formed the most wonderful sermon the world has ever known.

“But many do not notice that this new form of teaching by parables Jesus did not begin until near the end of the second year of his ministry. They do not observe that Jesus linked this parable-teaching with his announcement of great sins forgiven, and sin that cannot be forgiven. Notice how he said, ‘All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men ; but the blasphemy against

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the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven unto men.' Then we are told that the same day Jesus sat by the seaside and spake many things unto them in parables. So he had a new text for his new teaching, 'eternal sin,' and this he illustrated by parable as being taught everywhere, both in nature and among nations. This is the new teaching which Jesus here began and continued to press upon the people to the very last day of his public utterances."

As the class sat talking of sins which have no forgiveness, "neither in this world, neither in the world to come," there was one present who was deeply anxious to know what that sin could be, called the sin against the Holy Spirit. George Bancroft, whose notions of things had found such a sudden revolution at the bedside of the dying skeptic, was now willing to listen as he had not been for the past month. Sin had new meaning to George. The words of Jesus about eternal sin arrested his attention and startled his deepest thought.

At last he earnestly asked, "Mrs. Brown, what is this sin against the Holy Spirit, that can never be forgiven? How does one commit such an awful sin?"

Then Mrs. Brown opened a book that lay on the table before her. She had been peculiarly impressed, while preparing this

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lesson, that George had reached a dangerous crisis. She had marked a paragraph in a sermon of one of the great living preachers describing this sin. She felt that this was the moment when George might see himself in the description. So she replied to his question :

“George, there are various opinions among men as to this unforgiven sin. It is so sacred and sorrowful a theme that I do not dare give you an answer in my own language. Let me read to you the explanation of an aged minister who has given the subject much study. These are his words : ‘What is the unpardonable sin? The process by which this sin is committed is very simple : it is to continue to say No, no, no, to the offers of mercy, until you are a sinner let alone, or given up by the Holy Spirit. When thus left, conscience no longer exercises its functions, and the Holy Spirit no longer applies the truth. When this state is reached, the soul is usually calm and quiet. The individual can sleep well, and go on with his business, without much trouble about his soul’s salvation. He did not, does not, will not, know that he is doomed. It is not because the person is a greater sinner than others, but because he rejects the only remedy for sin, and continues this rejection until he is a sinner let alone.’

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“George,” said Mrs. Brown, “I think it is like this: If one stands and looks long at the sun defiantly, the piercing rays will at length put out his eyes. But if he go at the work for which the sun shines upon him, he finds that same sun full of help and health, and he rejoices in its blessing. Just so the soul loses its power to receive the truth and grows blind by refusing to obey the Holy Spirit. If it is sad for us to see a blind man, it is sadder still to see one who has lost soul sight! So our Saviour saw all nature full of spiritual lessons; and therefore he let nature speak through parables on this subject.

“Then Jesus sent out his twelve disciples, two and two, to preach the kingdom. They went seeing clearly sin’s awful doom. Does he not teach us that we ought to go forth into life with careful understanding of sin’s danger?”

Just here Bridget came with refreshments, and a few minutes’ rest was given. But George was thoroughly aroused from his slumbers. His pride had been completely humiliated the past week. Against the sin of trifling he had been warned by the whispers of the dying man. The danger of dallying and delaying, with the fierce light of eternal truth shining into his soul, he now saw for the first

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time. He asked Mrs. Brown to step into the reception room a moment. Alone they talked in perfect freedom.

Said George : “ Mrs. Brown, I do not dare trifle any longer. I must end this strife. I have stood looking toward the piercing sun, refusing to yield my pride, until I am growing blind. I am ready to yield and take the right path, if some one will lead me to it, but I am blind ; can you help me ? ”

“ Oh, George,” said Mrs. Brown, “ have you forgotten those first words of Jesus in the mountain instruction, ‘ Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven ’ ? You have just come to the place of blessing. If you hunger and thirst, you have only to ask, and he offers bread. You are now just ready to start with Jesus on his last year’s teaching. And that is the lesson that is to follow this evening. You are ready to see the beauty of the ‘ crimson thread ’ that marks the last year. Let us hasten to learn of Jesus.” They went back to another half-hour around the table.

CHAPTER XXI

THE THIRD PASSOVER

“**I**N the last lesson we saw Jesus,” said Mrs. Brown, “sending out the Twelve alone for the first time. It was drawing near the end of the second year of his teaching. While the Twelve were making this tour of Galilee, it would seem that Jesus received the news of the cruel murder of John the Baptist. After some days the apostles returned, and Jesus proposed that they all cross the sea of Galilee to the east side and rest awhile. The people saw them crossing, and so went on foot around the lake, to find Jesus on the other side.

“Then Jesus was moved at the eagerness of this multitude who had run some six or eight miles about the lake to hear and be healed. Hence the rest day was given to teaching them of the kingdom of God and healing them that had need of healing. Toward evening the people were fainting with hunger and without food. The disciples begged that Jesus would send them away to the surrounding villages to buy for themselves. He answered, ‘Give ye

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them to eat.' But they replied that there were only five loaves and two fishes among them.

"But Jesus had this food brought, commanded the multitude to be seated in groups of fifties, and fed the entire company from that one basket. When they were all abundantly satisfied, the disciples filled twelve baskets with the fragments. This greatly excited the people, and they were about to seize Jesus and compel him to be their king. So as it was now evening he constrained his disciples to take ship back to Capernaum while he sent the people away ; and he retired alone to the mountain to pray.

"What happened that night?" asked Mrs. Brown.

"Was that the night of the storm," said one, "when Jesus came to his disciples, walking upon the sea?"

"Yes ; and when Peter asked Jesus if he might come to him in the same way. But alas, his faith failed and he began to sink. Then Jesus caught him and said, 'Wherefore didst thou doubt?' an important lesson for us all."

When they had carefully studied this lesson, they looked at the new teaching that was given the next day at Capernaum, when the crowds

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that had been fed the day previous were offended by Jesus' telling them that he was the bread of life and would give them his flesh to eat.

"Here," said Mrs. Brown, "Jesus spoke of his death and resurrection being the great foundation of a true disciple's faith. Many of his followers went back from that day. A kingdom built upon giving up all, even life itself, they could not receive.

"Notice that the Passover was at hand. This is known as Jesus' third Passover; but he did not go to Jerusalem. A year ago, at his second Passover, you remember that he clearly announced that he was the Son of God, and that all men should honor him even as they honor the Father. Then the Jews planned to slay him, and they had followed him with spies and threats and plots during the whole year. But his time had not yet come; hence he did not go up to this third Passover. We here see that at this very time Jesus taught clearly his death and resurrection. And from that time forth Jesus began to show unto his disciples how he must go unto Jerusalem and be killed, and be raised the third day.

"This is a good time to review these great eras of Christ's teaching. At the first Pass-

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over, two years before, when Jesus began his public teaching, he had cleansed the temple and taught Nicodemus the necessity of being born again. During that year Jesus revealed what?"

They at once recalled that first element of Christ's character, "A perfect human life as our model."

"Yes, and what thread was most prominent in that first year's teaching?"

"The white thread of a pure human life," said Barton Brown, who was always first in recalling any past teaching, but who was always silent when any spiritual application was sought.

"At the second Passover, at Bethesda, what truth did Jesus clearly reveal," said Mrs. Brown, "and what helps us to recall it?"

"He proclaimed that he was the Son of God, equal with the Father," said Avery, "and we call it the 'blue thread,' because he came from above."

"And now at the time of the third Passover," continued the leader, "though Jesus went not to Jerusalem, what did he begin to show his disciples more clearly?" Mrs. Brown now looked at George Bancroft, for she felt that it was the very crisis of his soul and this was the truth he must grasp.

He answered, "This is the beginning of

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the 'crimson thread year,' when he spoke more clearly of the offering of himself as a sacrifice for sin."

"And what a year," said the teacher, "this must have been, when Jesus was ever facing Calvary and seeking to reconcile his disciples to its humiliation and sorrow! At first many who thought they were true disciples went back and walked no more with him, when he told them of his atoning sacrifice. He then turned to the Twelve and asked them, 'Will ye also go away?' Peter answered, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.' That has always been the sifting question, whether we can receive Jesus in his atoning sacrifice as God's gift of love for our redemption. If we falter here we cannot enter his kingdom of rest and peace."

This teacher believed thoroughly, as we have before seen, that the eye helps the ear to impress truth, and also that frequent reviews of the great underlying principles is the only way by which youth can retain facts. Hence the blackboard was often brought into use. Again the three-fold mission of the Christ was put in diagram; and the three shuttles bearing the white, blue, and red threads, were seen flying back and forth through the three years of public teaching. The life of Jesus now

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stood out so clearly that every miracle, every parable, every conversation in the Gospels, found a meaning, and reflected a light upon great underlying principles as never before. Each week brought the class together with new interest. As they saw Jesus enter the last year of his life, and observed that he was forsaken by many of the old friends, and that even Galilee's curious and exulting crowd began to drop away, or to carp and criticise, this class felt an intense sympathy and a wish to keep close to the Saviour in every step.

"Jesus now retired from Galilee to the outlying regions, both north and east," said Mrs. Brown. "Back and forth, from Tyre and Sidon upon the Mediterranean to Decapolis east of the sea of Galilee, he journeyed among new people who had not before received his visits, but much of his teaching was now directed to his own disciples. Once when they had been protesting against his dying, Jesus was obliged to rebuke Peter, saying: 'Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.'

"Shortly after this there was given to some of the disciples the most remarkable privilege ever given to men. One evening Jesus took Peter, James, and John up into a high moun-

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tain to pray. As he prayed, his countenance changed, and his raiment shone with a heavenly light, and these disciples saw two men from heaven, Moses and Elijah, talking with him.

“And now,” said the leader, “notice the theme of conversation between these heavenly visitors and Jesus. It is the same topic that busied the Master’s thoughts these last days. It is the thing which Peter said must not be, the death of Jesus, the ‘decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.’ The word translated decease, literally mean ‘exodus,’ the passing over. Then when the heavenly visitors had departed, there came a cloud over the disciples, and they heard a voice saying, ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.’ This event, like a curtain lifted from the heavenly world, was to prepare these disciples for the journey to the cross.”

Then Mrs. Brown recalled the conversation with George Bancroft, before the lesson. She felt that the theme of the evening was the one which exactly matched his state of mind, but George himself realized it as could no one else. He felt that like Peter he had been resisting all instruction to receive the crucified Christ. He too, had been sorely reprovèd and robbed

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of all his theories. Now he was waiting for some new revelation. The lesson left him gazing toward this mountain where the disciples went with Jesus to pray and found new light and heard the heavenly voice.

Mrs. Brown was impressed that it was a fitting place to close. "May these mountains of heavenly visitation become as real to us," said she, "as to these disciples. May we all have them wrought into our deepest experience."

Then they separated. George remained alone in the study. As he sat with bowed head, he recalled the earnest whispers of the dying skeptic. He thought of that last broken sentence, "Don't trifle." Vividly he again saw the exhausted man drop back and gasp for breath. He then recalled the evening's lessons concerning great sin forgiven, and Christ coming toward the cross, with the vivid description of the sin against the Holy Spirit, never forgiven! He lifted his head almost in fear to tarry alone, and there just opposite him hung that picture of faith clinging to the cross, with the surging waves dashing over a wrecked vessel. Then the last scene of the evening came to him, of the mountain of prayer, and the voice saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear

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ye him !” Then George Bancroft bowed his head again upon the table.

We may not enter the sacred enclosure of his heart, nor can human words describe that moment when the risen Christ appeared. He said afterward to Mrs. Brown that as he sat there helpless, suddenly a great gratitude came into his mind that all his false hopes and vain delusions had been swept away, that his essay of smooth lies had been torn to pieces. Then the first words of the mountain sermon came to his mind, “Blessed are the poor in spirit ; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” “Then,” said he, “I saw all this life of Jesus that we have studied, with all his truth and love and character, waiting to enrich me. I dropped upon my knees feeling that every barrier was gone, and I trusted his promise of blessing.” George was now ready to join the little company whose motto was, “Mounting Heavenward.”

CHAPTER XXII

THE OVERFLOWING CUP

THE week following the last lesson brought both sorrow and joy. George Bancroft rose early, the morning after his conversion, and sought an interview with his father. When the two met in the library, he said :

“Father, can I sit with Mr. Blanchard, in your place, this morning?”

“Your call, the other day, excited him, his nurse says ; I do not know what to say about it, my son.”

“But it is different now,” replied George ; “he was worried because he thought he had led me astray. And I was excited myself, because I saw so clearly that my false hopes could not face death. Last night’s lesson showed me the danger of trifling with sin and the Saviour. I saw that I was like one standing and looking defiantly at the sun, and that I must grow blind soon unless I turned to walk in the light.” Then he told his father his experience afterward alone in the library.

Mr. Bancroft was overjoyed. He understood it all, for he had so recently passed

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through that same conflict. "Oh, yes, George," said his father, "this will be delightful news to Mr. Blanchard. He is constantly worrying lest he has led you to a life of doubt. Tell him I hope to see him during the day."

The nurse was very reluctant to admit George, until he said that he came for his father. Mr. Bancroft had been accustomed to give the sick man, after each lesson, some fresh glimpse he had received of the Saviour.

Mr. Blanchard was waiting anxiously this morning. He said to George, "Your father and Avery come to tell me of their weekly visits with the Christ. I hunger for the help they bring. What of last night?"

Then George calmly told him of the scene of the transfiguration, where two heavenly visitors came and talked with Jesus about his "decease at Jerusalem." "Our teacher told us," said George, "that decease here really meant, 'exodus'; they were talking of the 'passing over,' which Jesus should accomplish at Jerusalem. It made death seem, to a friend of Jesus, just like passing over a river into another country. Everything, Mr. Blanchard, is different with me now. I can't explain it, but last night I felt that all my old arguments and selfish hopes were swept away, as when the

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waves sweep over a ship. I thought of your words to me, that these old theories had proved false and could not face death. Then I saw Jesus on the mountain, as in one of our lessons, saying, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit.' I knew I was now poor, so I grasped his word, 'blessed,' just as you hold my hand. I thought I must come and tell you about it."

The sick man's anxious face lighted up with a new radiance. He knew George was saved, it shone in his face ; and he saw in this simple statement the way of life as no other had described it. This picture of a poor, shipwrecked soul laying hold of that one word, "blessed," as it fell from the lips of Jesus, was a precious gleam of hope.

Then George read to him the Beatitudes. When he came to the promise, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness ; for they shall be filled," the dying man whispered, "Read that again." George repeated the promise.

"I do hunger, I do thirst ; that's all I have. Oh, he pities me, and says, 'blessed' !" And the poor man seemed to take that one word, "blessed," as a cup of cold water to his thirsty soul. "I thought I had led you to ruin, and here you are leading me to Jesus. The burden is gone ! I was sinking in a dark

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sea ; he has drawn me up to himself on that mountain of light ! Read to me, George, about Jesus on that other mountain.”

Then George read about the mount of transfiguration. The anxious, haggard look was gone from Mr. Blanchard’s face ; and the pale countenance now lighting up with the new peace, shone with almost heavenly luster. His eyes seemed gazing upward upon the mountain scene, and his lips whispered, “Blessed, blessed ! Talking of the exodus !—passing over—passing over !” His mind had caught clearly the new meaning of death which George had brought him from the last lesson. His whispers were growing weaker. George summoned Mrs. Blanchard. She was just in time to hear him whisper, “Good-bye.” Then again after a pause, she saw his lips move. She listened closely, and she heard the faintest utterance as if from a voice in the distance, “Passing over ! Blessed—blessed.”

The pulse had stopped. She closed his eyes, for the end had come. In three days Pastor Little stood by the coffin and told the gathered company that through the past month the man had repeatedly said that death had disarmed him of all his doubts, and that Christian friends had been permitted to show

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him the merciful Christ who appeared to him in great glory in the last lingering hours.

The community was greatly stirred by the fact of this remarkable conversion. The people all began to inquire for the quiet cause.

When next the little company met for study in Lyman Bancroft's library, the theme announced by Mrs. Brown was, "Jesus the Overflowing Cup at the Feast of Tabernacles." She told them that some six months had passed since the Saviour's third Passover, when he did not go up to Jerusalem. He with the Twelve had since made two great tours of northern Galilee and the surrounding districts. The time of the feast of 'Tabernacles' came. Some of Jesus's own kindred urged him away from Capernaum, because they did not believe in him. It is quite probable that these men desired to deliver Jesus over to the enemies at Jerusalem ; hence he did not go with them. But after they had gone, he went up secretly about the middle of the feast.

"It had been a year and a half," continued Mrs. Brown, "since the Saviour was at Jerusalem, because of the exciting plots of his enemies. Many were anxious to see him again. They were surprised by his suddenly appearing in the temple and addressing the crowded courts. Then the Jews appointed

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officers to take him for punishment. They went while he was teaching, but after hearing his words of life and light they had no heart to arrest him. They returned and were asked, 'Why have ye not brought him?' They could only answer, 'Never man spake like this man!' He had said 'Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me.' This is the year when he is everywhere weaving in the crimson thread.

"We have it revealed why Jesus was careful to be at the close of this feast of Tabernacles in his last year, when he showed that it was fulfilled in himself," said the leader as she asked them to turn to Christ's special message (John 7 : 37-40) on the last day of the feast.

"It was a custom for the priest," said Mrs. Brown, "each morning to bring water from the fountain of Siloam, in a golden cup, as a drink-offering. As he passed through the courts and handed the cup to another priest at the altar, repeating the words of the prophet, 'With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation,' the people took up the shout with joyous exultation.

"Just then Jesus stood up and cried with a loud voice to attract the attention of all the people : 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me,

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out of him shall flow rivers of living water.' 'This,' says John, 'spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive.' Beautiful lesson ! Every disciple of Jesus is to be an overflowing cup of this living water to others. As the water was poured from the golden cup into the silver basin at the altar, and then flowed on, amid the rejoicings of the people, what a vivid picture is given us of Christ at the altar of his sacrifice, pouring from the golden goblet of his purity into our hearts that grace which flows on to bless others !''

Mrs. Brown had received marked illustration of this in her own class. These converts had carried the water of life to the thirsty soul of the dying skeptic. His conversion had stirred the whole town. Men were not more surprised when Jesus raised the dead, than was this community to learn that Mr. Blanchard had become a Christian.

"On the evenings of the feast of Tabernacles," said the leader, "the great golden lamps in the courts of the temple were brilliantly lighted. This gave Jesus opportunity to say, 'I am the light of the world ; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.' They murmured and criticised. Then said Jesus, 'When ye

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have lifted up the Son of man then shall ye know that I am he.' His eye is now ever upon the cross. Though his time had not yet come, it was nearing.

"Then the Jews took up stones to cast at him, because he said, 'I am the light of the world.' As he passed out of the temple he saw a blind man. His disciples asked him why this man was born blind. He answered, 'That the works of God should be made manifest in him.' Then Jesus anointed his eyes with clay and sent him to wash at the pool of Siloam ; and the man received his sight.

"Notice," continued the leader, "how this light of the world shines to give light to others. He is eyes to the blind. We can see why he anointed his eyes with the clay, and sent him to wash in the fountain of Siloam. It was at this feast where the golden cup borne from this fountain, and poured out at the altar, represented the cleansing and healing of the Holy Spirit sent in Jesus's name. Blessed fountain of healing that can restore blind eyes !

"Then the wicked Jews cast the healed man out, because he said Jesus had given him sight. The Saviour found him again and revealed himself as the Messiah who enlightens the soul ; and the man entered the kingdom.

"So this man cast out by the Jews, but re-

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ceived within the true sanctuary by Christ, led the Saviour to speak of himself as not only the Good Shepherd that giveth his life for the sheep, but also as the door by which they enter in. With what a tender voice he called to the people, 'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold ; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice.'

"These were his great lessons at the feast of Tabernacles, from the golden cup from the fountain of Siloam poured out at the altar, signifying the overflowing Spirit ; from the brilliant lights of the temple and the blind man healed, illustrating Christ as the light of the world ; and from the man cast out and welcomed to the kingdom of heaven, betokening the Good Shepherd as he lays down his life, opening the door to the inner fold.

"Blessed feast of Tabernacles ! What lessons did the Master gather from that golden cup from Siloam, from golden candlesticks ablaze in the temple courts, and from the blind man healed and saved ! Alas ! Those who rejected such teaching grew blind enough to crucify him ! They dashed the golden cup away ! They gazed defiantly at the Sun of Righteousness till they grew blind ! They shut the door that was opening at cost of his blood !"

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As Mrs. Brown closed this picture she was near to tears, and so quietly said, "Good-night." When she and her children reached home they sat a few minutes in silence. Then Fannie went to her room. Barton after a few minutes came to kiss his mother good-night ; but as he touched her lips he burst into tears. He had been quietly thinking much, under these lessons for the past few weeks, but was struggling to resist. The picture of these men resisting Christ under such light, and then growing blind enough to crucify him, awakened Barton to a sense of fear. Then his mother's emotion had melted him. This wise mother understood his temperament.

She only said, "My son, shall we bow and tell the Saviour all?" He sobbed and nodded his head. Her prayer only told Jesus to hear her son as he now yielded and asked to be received within the fold. Then Barton said, "Jesus, forgive me—I give up everything, to follow thee."

Then his mother finished his prayer, with an overflowing cup of thanksgiving.

CHAPTER XXIII

TOWARD JERUSALEM

ON the following Sunday afternoon the young friends met at Mrs. Brown's home. The five had now all been led to trust the Saviour. They stood in a circle and joined hands, George and Barton thus uniting in the new Christian League, whose motto was "Mounting Heavenward." They agreed now to hold occasional meetings, to advise concerning personal work ; their meetings should open with their joining in a circle and repeating in concert the three stanzas beginning, "Heaven is not reached at a single bound," and then they should sing together, "Whiter than snow." They were then to have an informal consultation concerning ways of helping and encouraging others.

Every barrier was now removed. Their conversion had banished all petty jealousies and selfish pride. Even Barton Brown's reserve and quick temper had been vanquished, and he was ready to enter heartily into fellowship and service.

"Avery," said Mrs. Brown, "have you and

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your mother decided your plans as to the home?"

Since Mr. Blanchard had left little means but their cottage, and Avery was the only child, it had been a difficult question to decide. Doctor Sinnett had proposed to Mrs. Blanchard, since she was such an efficient nurse, that she rent her cottage, and make her home in his own family, when not engaged in that service. He said to her that Avery had made himself almost a necessity to him, and that he proposed to give him every advantage while remaining in his office.

"Yes, ma'am," said Avery; "mother has rented the house and accepted the doctor's kind offer. She intends to spend a few weeks in Cincinnati soon, studying with the trained nurses in the hospital. So I am to remain with the doctor."

"Oh, how happily your faithful life has provided a home for your mother!" replied Mrs. Brown. "You little knew what a blessing your hard work and faithful service last winter would bring."

Two of Avery's old associates had come to trouble. Robert Jones and Timothy Hughes, familiarly known as Bob and Tim, had been arrested, and were now in jail. They had entered a house one night, in the absence of

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the family, and for this depredation were bound over to court and were now awaiting trial. They were bright boys from well-known families, who had fallen into this wild, reckless life. Their condition deeply impressed Avery, especially when he thought how he himself had been rescued from their association. Avery and George, by Mrs. Brown's advice, decided to go and see these boys in jail that afternoon. They each took a Testament with some marked passages.

They found the boys quite humiliated, and greatly surprised to have George and Avery make them a friendly call. Robert Jones was quite penitent, and told Avery his shame and sorrow. Avery urged him to be frank and truthful about the whole affair, and then he would find friends. They gave them the Testaments before leaving. Bob promised to read his, but Tim Hughes received his sullenly. As the boys passed out they heard Tim dash his Testament against the wall across the room. The condition of the boys in jail became a matter of much thought among these friends the following week.

When the lesson came they were all again in the Bancroft library. The leader recalled the last lesson, on Jesus at the feast of Tabernacles, and then told them that it seemed that

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the Saviour must have gone immediately back to Capernaum, for a last farewell to his home in Galilee.

“ We have it stated shortly afterward,” said Mrs. Brown, “ that his face was steadfastly set to go to Jerusalem. Not only the Twelve, but many other disciples, prepared to go with him. So Jesus sent seventy, two and two, to go before him and visit the cities and villages where he was about to come.”

All the circumstances of this sad farewell were gathered up from the Gospels. It was plain that many professed disciples had forsaken Jesus this last year, since he had told them plainly that he was to be crucified at Jerusalem and would ascend to heaven again. They wanted a king who would claim Herod's throne and break the Roman yoke. Capernaum, where most of his mighty works had been done, had now treated lightly his teaching ; and Jesus was compelled to depart pronouncing upon that city the woe of his rejection. Herod, who had put to death John the Baptist, was now plotting to destroy Jesus if he remained in his dominion.

They saw also how some disciples, who still professed great attachment, now came with numerous excuses for not setting out with him. One wanted to go and bid his friends at home

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good-bye ; another wanted to remain in Galilee until after the burial of his father. But Jesus said to them all, " No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

" Yet there was a company of faithful friends," said Mrs. Brown, " who courageously set out on this journey with Jesus. When they came down to the border of Samaria he sent messengers to a neighboring village to find entertainment. But these Samaritans would not receive Jesus, because his face was toward Jerusalem. This aroused the anger of his disciples, and they suggested that they should call down fire from heaven and consume that whole town. Jesus answered, ' Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.' The disciples had forgotten the Sermon on the Mount, ' Love your enemies ; do good to them that despitefully use you ' ; but they peacefully went to another village. They then probably turned to the east of the Jordan, and went down through Perea, Jesus preaching the kingdom as he went.

" Just before Jesus and the Twelve reached Jerusalem, the seventy returned with joy, telling the Master that the devils were cast out

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through their power. 'Yes,' said the Saviour, 'I saw Satan's kingdom fall, under your faith and service. But rejoice rather that your names are written in heaven.' It was then that Jesus uttered that precious and tender promise that goes on still blessing the weary millions: 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

"But enemies were also following and seeking to entrap him in his words. On the way toward Jerusalem a certain lawyer asked, 'Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' Jesus told him to love the Lord with all his heart and his neighbor as himself. But the lawyer, seeking to puzzle Jesus, replied, 'Who is my neighbor?' Then the Master uttered the parable of the Good Samaritan. They were probably then on that very road from Jericho to Jerusalem where the mountain gorges were infested with robbers, and where what Jesus described often occurred."

Then one of the company read that parable. Avery that very afternoon had made another visit to the jail to see Bob and Tim. It was nearing the time of court when the trial would send them to the penitentiary. Avery recalled the distress of Bob Jones as he felt his disgrace and especially mourned over the sadness brought to his parents.

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“What changed your life, Avery?” Bob had asked. “You used to go with us and then suddenly you left us. Was it because you got that place at the doctor’s?”

“No,” said Avery; “that came to me after I said I was done with that sort of a life. Bob, do you want me to tell you just what changed me? It is strange; I don’t fully understand it myself. I accidentally met George Bancroft one night, and he invited me to go with him to Mrs. Brown’s class; but it wasn’t an accident. You have heard about that class in Banker Bancroft’s library. Somehow I was already getting a little ashamed of our wild life. That night their lesson was about the temptation of Jesus, and his first disciples, or choosing companions. Well, I saw at once what a fool I was, to throw away my life as we were doing and fight against Jesus Christ, the best friend in the world. And when I was asked to join that class, Bob, it seemed just as if something was drawing me to a new life. It is that study and seeing Jesus, that has done everything for me. Oh, I wish you could get there with us!”

“Yes, but it’s too late,” said Bob, as he burst into tears.

This had occurred just before Avery came to the lesson. When they came to the seventy

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sent out, two and two, to prepare for Jesus' coming, he thought of George and himself going to the jail, and wondered if they had not been sent to prepare for Jesus' coming there. When they read the parable of the Good Samaritan, his thoughts were busy and anxious for the boys in the jail.

"As Jesus was nearing Jerusalem," said Mrs. Brown, "they came to the village of Bethany, only two miles out of the city. Jesus was invited to stop in the home of three friends."

Just here the doorbell rang; and Bridget ushered Pastor Little into the library. "I planned to call, Mrs. Brown," said he, "just at the close of your lesson; pardon me if I have interrupted. I desired to consult with you about moving the class to the church. There is a widespread seriousness in the community, and many are coming to my study to inquire upon the subject of religion. I am conscious that it is the direct influence of this class. I desire to hold an inquirers' meeting on Tuesday evenings. When you have finished this lesson we can consult."

"Well, we have just come with Jesus to the first of his visits to Bethany," said the leader; "I think we will stop here and give the next lesson to Bethany as special topic. For of all

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the towns or cities mentioned in the Bible, none is so attractive to me as beautiful Bethany, 'the house of song.' Now we will consider the pastor's message."

When Mr. Little had again presented his wish that the lessons be given in the lecture room of the church by Mrs. Brown, to be followed by a special meeting for inquirers, she said that she preferred to finish this course with the class in the library, as they were so near the end.

"But, pastor," said she, "if you are impressed that lessons on the life of Christ ought to be given in the church let us begin a new course, commencing with his youth."

So it was arranged to open another class for special inquirers on the next Tuesday evening, to be followed by Pastor Little's personal conversation meeting.

When the class had adjourned, Avery and George sought an interview with Mr. Bancroft. They told him of their visits to the jail, and Bob Jones' penitence, and how they had wondered if anything could be done by which he could get to this lesson.

"He could be bailed out," said Mr. Bancroft; "but his father has not sufficient means to do that. He came to see me to-day and is almost broken-hearted over the sad affair. I

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will call with you to-morrow and talk with these boys.''

Thus the evening's study of the words of Jesus concerning the Good Samaritan caring for the poor unfortunate man by the wayside, sent out currents of influence that carried blessing to wounded hearts that very week.

CHAPTER XXIV

FRIENDS AT BETHANY

WHEN Mr. Bancroft went to the jail, he told the boys that it was yet two weeks until their trial, and that it would be a great comfort to their parents to have them at home. There was but one way to accomplish this, he told them, and that was for some one to go their bail that they would appear at court at the proper time.

“I have come,” said Mr. Bancroft, “because your parents are my friends, and because I want to help you both to see your wrong and begin life over again. Unless you are tired of this wild, reckless life, you might just as well stay in jail and let the law take its severest course.”

Bob said that he deserved to remain in jail, and that he was ashamed to see his parents, as he had brought this disgrace upon them, but that he was done with such a wicked life and longed for forgiveness for the past.

Tim would make little reply but sat in sullen indifference. He refused to make any acknowledgment. When asked if he would like

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to be released from jail to be at home until the trial, he expressed no special concern. Mr. Bancroft felt that Tim would more likely be benefited in jail than out, but he at once signed the bond for Bob and walked with him to his home.

"Robert," said Mr. Bancroft, as they were drawing near the house, "I have done this to give you one more chance to become a man. Will you take my advice?"

"I will do anything you say, Mr. Bancroft," said Bob, "and I mean to do right. But I need a friend to tell me what to do."

"Robert, be perfectly honest; tell the whole truth, no matter what comes," said Mr. Bancroft. "Stay in the house with your mother to-day and this evening some of us will see you."

That night George and Avery spent the evening with Bob, and told him all about the change that had come into their lives. It was arranged that on Friday evening they would call for him to go to the library for study. The evening came and Bob came to the class. Mrs. Brown met him with that calm reserve that sorrow and sympathy combine to give in a true friend of the erring.

"In our last lesson," said the leader, "we followed Jesus on that last journey from Gal-

Friends at Bethany

ilee, until he stopped with friends at Bethany. It is the first time this town has been mentioned ; but it has a large place in Christ's life for the remaining few weeks. No doubt Martha and Lazarus had become his disciples before this, and probably had welcomed Jesus to their home on former visits. At least Martha, the elder, was taking much interest in preparing her table for the Saviour now. While Mary sat at his feet and listened to his gracious words, Martha came in to ask for her assistance.

“Jesus said to her, ‘Martha, one thing is needful ; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.’ I suppose that in that very hour Mary had for the first time received Jesus as her own personal Saviour ; and Christ was now announcing the joyful news of her conversion. She had possibly not been a dutiful sister, and may have given Martha much trouble. The proud heart of this younger sister had perhaps rejected Jesus, and had grown careless. But now she bowed penitently at the Master's feet and heard the story of his forgiving love.”

“Why, I always thought,” said Fannie, “that it meant that Martha was troubled with many things in her kitchen and household cares ; and that Jesus was telling her that it

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was better to do as Mary was doing, sit at his feet."

"It is usually explained so," said Mrs. Brown; "but it has now come to me very forcibly in the other sense. Jesus said to the elder sister, when she intimated that Mary was not so helpful as she should be, and wished that Jesus would speak to her upon the subject, 'Martha, Martha, you have been full of care and troubled about many things in your sister's life, but it is all over now; she has chosen the good part. She will never cause you any more trouble.' For, you remember, not long afterward they made a great supper for Jesus in Bethany, and it was this same Mary who broke the costly alabaster box and anointed both the head and the feet of Jesus, until the odor filled all the house. When the woman of Galilee had anointed Jesus' feet in Simon the Pharisee's house Jesus said of her, 'She loveth much because she hath been forgiven much.' So I think it was a proud and rebellious heart that Mary yielded as she sat at Jesus' feet, and one that the Saviour intimates had given her anxious sister much trouble. But with what joy Jesus here announces that she was now saved.

"Oh, beautiful Bethany! How precious are its lessons! What friendship for Jesus is

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there recorded ! How he loved at the setting sun to go from the strife and envy and malice of his enemies in Jerusalem, to find the welcome and affection of these trusting hearts in Bethany ! Whatever they may have been before, he forgot it all in their precious love and humble devotion.”

The lesson soon followed Jesus from Jerusalem, where at the feast of Dedication the Jews stoned him for again saying, “I and my Father are one,” into Perea, beyond the Jordan. They noticed how Jesus was met by surging crowds ; for he was no doubt now going from town to town where the seventy had recently gone to herald his coming. They saw how busy were these last weeks, and how tender the Saviour’s words were becoming as he drew near the end.

“In these Perea days,” said Mrs. Brown, “Jesus had again gone to Bethabara where he was first pointed out as Messiah, when the heavens opened, the dove descended, and the voice, ‘This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased,’ was heard. What precious memories were awakened of John’s faithful words, and of the coming of those first disciples to his tent ! On a Sabbath he was invited to dine with a Pharisee. He saw how the guests chose the chief seats, and gave the lesson on humility : ‘For whosoever exalteth himself shall

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be abased ; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.'

“It was in these days that he uttered the parable of the prodigal son ; teaching us how ready our Heavenly Father is to welcome the wandering sinner who is sick and tired and who resolves with the prodigal, ‘I will arise and go unto my father, and say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.’ Let us now all turn to this parable and read it in concert.”

When they were not more than half through the reading, Bob Jones put his head upon the table and sobbed aloud. This put new tenderness in their voices, as they read on ; and it seemed to the lad, just from the jail and awaiting his trial, that it was Jesus passing that way and speaking to him these gracious words for the first time.

“One day a messenger came from Bethany,” resumed Mrs. Brown, “telling Jesus that his loved friend, Lazarus, was sick. Jesus seems to have sent word back to the sisters that this sickness was not unto death, but that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. But before the messenger could arrive Lazarus was in his grave. Jesus, busy with the crowds of Perea, toiled on for two days. Then he said to his

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disciples, Let us go into Judea again. But the disciples, remembering that Jesus had been stoned away from Jerusalem a few days before, pleaded with the Saviour not to return. The Passover was drawing near, but with all his teaching they were still poorly fitted for the trial. Then Jesus said plainly, 'Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe.'

“As Jesus had raised the widow's son at Nain, that he might encourage the faith of the messengers from John's prison ; and as he had brought to life the daughter of Jairus at Capernaum, just as the Twelve were starting on their first tour alone ; so now, as in fear they are coming close to the cross, Jesus sees a faltering faith and gives new proof of his divine glory.”

Then they followed the Saviour back to Bethany and saw him mingle his tears with those of the bereaved sisters and restore his friend from the grave.

“Visitors were there from Jerusalem,” said the leader, “who spread the news throughout the city. The Jewish council was at once called, and the high priest, Caiaphas, who was president of the council, said it was better that one man should die rather than the whole nation perish ; giving it as his opinion that

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unless Jesus was destroyed he would cause such an insurrection of the people that the Roman government would put an end to them all. So it was now decided to put Jesus to death.

“But our Saviour, knowing all things, needed not that they come and announce their decision, and knowing that he was to be taken the very night of the offering of the paschal lamb, secretly withdrew with his disciples to the city of Ephraim, some ten miles north of Jericho, on the borders of the wilderness. Here our Lord tarried until he saw, from his mountain retirement overlooking the Jordan, the Galilean pilgrims [streaming down the valley toward Jerusalem, to attend the approaching Passover. Then he joined the great company, and passed through Jericho on the way.”

Then they took their Bibles again and read of the blind men sitting by the wayside, who on hearing the multitudes inquired what it meant and were told, “Jesus of Nazareth passeth by,” and then cried, “Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on us!” Then they read of Zaccheus climbing the tree to see Jesus, and how he was saved and Jesus went to his home.

“And when some murmured because Jesus went to the despised publican’s house,” said

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Mrs. Brown, "then Jesus repeated those gracious words that often fell from his lips, 'For the Son of man is come to seek and to save the lost.' But we must close this lesson, only noticing that Jesus came to Bethany and spent the last Sabbath before his crucifixion with these loved friends who had waited anxiously for his return."

As Bob Jones walked home he kept repeating, "I will arise and go unto my father, and say, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight." And that night his pillow was wet with tears of penitence and grief. He sobbed himself to sleep at last, and dreamed of the surging crowd, and when he asked what it meant he heard a voice saying, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by."

CHAPTER XXV

TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

PASTOR LITTLE was not disappointed in his faith. The mid-week meetings for two months had been quickened by the voice of the new converts that came one by one to tell of their visits with Christ. Banker Bancroft seemed to be journeying with the Saviour, so vividly did his short testimonies portray some new incident each week. Avery Blanchard had been so marvelously drawn from his wild associations, and had been so happily permitted to see his skeptical father rescued from doubt at the very threshold of death, that his sublime faith was the wonder of every week. Lately, George Bancroft, the proud, ambitious young man who had seemed to stand above all his associates, had come into that mid-week meeting and testified with a humble and child-like spirit of having seen Jesus the Christ. Even the younger ones, Amelia and Barton, calmly spoke of their personal knowledge of the Lord as if they had gone with Andrew and John to talk with Christ in his tent at the Jordan.

Triumphal Entry

Hence the people were wondering how they might thus come into touch with the Man of Galilee. When the announcement was made that the lessons in the life of Jesus would be given in the church for all who were interested to know and follow the Christ, the room was thronged from the first. The eager faces of a hundred inquirers, as Mrs. Brown arose, was truly inspiring. She told them how she came to begin this work, to win the royal youth of Canton ; and how they were moved as they for the first time heard the story of Jesus of Nazareth as he lived among men. Then she told of her longing to draw her own children to the same entranced interest in the Christ, instead of their being carried away with the mere frivolities of life.

“And now,” said Mrs. Brown, “the pastor has asked that we might here together make another journey with our Lord. We will begin with Jesus in the temple, when he uttered his first words that have been recorded : ‘Wist ye not that I must be about my father’s business ?’ ”

Then she pictured Jesus, as Son of God, starting out upon his journey to show us how to live a right life, as well as to reveal the divine friendship for such as turn their faces toward God and eternity. She hastened on

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to the scene of Jesus coming to John at the Jordan, and presenting himself for baptism, saying as his next recorded words, "Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." Then with skill she lifted the curtain to their own hearts, as they came to stand by the side of Jesus Christ with that same purpose to live a clean life and to journey with Jesus as he started out to bring the world to himself, showing that when we come to his side to walk with him, the voice from the open heavens saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," is our Heavenly Father speaking to us as surely as to Jesus!

The pastor stepped to the front and said, "How many can say, each looking into his own heart, 'I now desire to know and follow Jesus'?" With solemn and hearty decision shining in every face, the entire company rose to their feet. Then as the voice of prayer ascended for the Master to accept these as his followers who would now start on the journey with him, the Christ of Galilee seemed to have come into this very town.

After such experiences the little company came to the Bancroft library again to take this lesson of Jesus coming to Jerusalem to his last Passover.

"Jesus we left at Bethany last week," said

Triumphal Entry

Mrs. Brown, "as he came with the crowds, teaching as he journeyed. They were anxiously awaiting his arrival and had prepared a supper in the home of Simon the leper, perhaps one whom Jesus had healed. Then it was that Mary took a pound of ointment, very precious, and anointed her Lord. When Judas complained of the waste, Jesus said, 'Let her alone; she hath done what she could; she hath anointed my body aforehand for the burying.'

"Jesus and the disciples rested there over the Sabbath and early on the first day of the week they prepared to enter the city. Great crowds that had come up to the Passover were encamped about Mount Olivet, waiting and anxious to see Jesus again. Many whom he had healed of leprosy, or blindness, or other foul disease, and those who had heard their Lord say, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee,' were thrilled with delight to see Jesus coming. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, and cried, 'Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, even the king of Israel.'

"Then came two of the disciples bringing a colt, and Jesus sat thereon. Multitudes went before or followed after, some casting their garments in the way, others strewing the branches

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of trees before him, all moving on in triumphal procession toward the city.

“Then we come to one of the most touching scenes in the life of our Lord. As they passed from Bethany around the foot of Mount Olivet, they came at length in full view of the city which had been so sacred in its associations ever since the days of King David. Its glory in the past, and its doom in the near future, moved Jesus to tears. Here is the description of another in which I think you will all be interested. George, will you read Far-rar’s words as he paints this picture?”

She handed him the book and he read the following paragraph: “‘And who can interpret, who can enter into the mighty rush of divine compassion which, at that spectacle, shook the Saviour’s soul? He had dropped *silent* tears at the grave of Lazarus; here he wept aloud. All the shame of his mockery, all the anguish of his torture, was powerless, five days afterward, to extort from him a single groan, or to wet his eyelids with one trickling tear; but here all the pity that was within him overmastered his human spirit, and he not only wept, but broke into a passion of lamentation, in which the choked voice seemed to struggle for its utterance. A strange Messianic triumph! a strange interruption of the festal cries! The

Triumphal Entry

Deliverer weeps over the city which it is now too late to save. . . . "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace!" . . . and there sorrow interrupted the sentence, and when he found voice to continue, he could only add, "but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee that thine enemies shall . . . lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.'" . . .

"There had been a pause in the procession while Jesus shed his bitter tears and uttered his prophetic lamentation. But now the people in the valley of Kedron, and about the walls of Jerusalem, and the pilgrims whose booths and tents stood so thickly on the green slopes below had caught sight of the approaching company, and heard the echo of the glad shouts, and knew what it meant. . . . And tearing down the green and graceful branches, the people streamed up the road to meet the approaching prophet. And when the two streams of people met . . . they left him riding in the midst, and some preceding, some following him, advanced, shouting "Hosannas" and waving branches, to the gate of Jerusalem.'" . . .

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“Such was the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem,” said Mrs. Brown; “and yet it was interrupted by his burst of tears over the multitudes who rejected the messages of mercy and brought the city to woful destruction. What should it teach us all, but to be humble amid our best success?”

Then their conversation turned to the wonderful movement in the church. We have spoken of the first meeting; the second had increased the numbers, and the farmers were coming in from the surrounding neighborhood. A Sunday-school girl had brought her father, who at the close of the meeting said he had not been inside a church for thirty years. He then went into the study with the pastor and yielded himself up to be led, like a little child, into the kingdom.

“There was, as you say,” said Mrs. Brown, “much in that meeting to remind one of that triumphal procession. To see more than one hundred persons coming with such enthusiasm to welcome Christ to their hearts, and rising up to espouse his service, after these years of indifference, is surely cause for great joy. But while we were rejoicing with their coming, at the same hour there were far more gathered in the saloons and dens of sin in our town, than we saw rejoicing with Christ. Let us not exult

Triumphal Entry

without some tears over the fact that many are plotting to crucify our Lord, not knowing the hastening doom of sin."

Bob Jones was again here in the library. His trial was coming before another lesson. He expected, as he said he deserved, to be sentenced to the penitentiary before another meeting. Still he was full of gratitude that he had caught this glimpse of Jesus and his yearning love for such prodigals. He was already planning in his mind his evening study of the life of Jesus when he should be shut in a cell. He thought, as Mrs. Brown spoke with tears of the young men in the saloons, how he had just commenced going with Tim Hughes to these evil resorts. Then a secret satisfaction came to his mind that he could take Christ with him to the penitentiary, while if he had continued his old life of sin at home, he would probably have been cut off without hope.

As they adjourned the class, the Christian League members joined hands in a circle. They explained to Robert Jones what it meant, that as each one trusted Christ and sought now with all the heart to know and follow him, they joined hands as a pledge to help one another and take the same motto, "Mounting Heavenward."

"Will you join our circle, Robert?" said

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Fannie Brown as she turned toward the boy who must the next day appear in court to answer the charge of housebreaking.

The tears rolled down the cheeks of Robert as he stood in silence for a few moments, and then he answered, "This class has led me to know Jesus as a friend, and I long to follow him ; but nobody knows me as anything but Bob Jones, the thief ; I am not fit to take your hands."

Then Fannie and George went and led him to stand between them in the completed circle, while all repeated with a new enthusiasm :

"We rise by the things that are under our feet,
And the vanquished ills that we hourly meet."

CHAPTER XXVI

SENTENCED

WHEN the little group of fast friends next met in the Bancroft library, two thieves had been tried and sentenced. Tim Hughes and Bob Jones had been brought into court.

“ Timothy Hughes, guilty, or not guilty ? ” said the judge.

Tim’s face had hardened while in jail with old criminals, and his eyes flashed with malice as he promptly said, “ Not guilty.”

Then the judge called up the other, “ Robert Jones, guilty, or not guilty ? ”

Bob meekly arose and answered, “ Guilty.”

The judge had known nothing concerning him, only that Banker Bancroft had bailed him out of jail. He heard the acknowledgment with surprise. He scanned Bob’s face in silence, as if studying his character, and then said : “ This is an unusual case, that two are arraigned for the same offense, and one answers, guilty, and the other, not guilty. But we will proceed with the trial of Timothy Hughes.”

The evidence was complete and Tim received

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his sentence as a hardened criminal at eighteen, and in irons he was taken to Columbus and locked within prison walls.

Before sentence was pronounced upon Bob the judge had learned all the facts of his character and penitence. His charge was full of sympathy and encouragement. He committed Bob for one year to the Reform Farm. Mr. Bancroft asked the privilege of taking him to the reformatory, as he was well acquainted with the superintendent and wished to tell him all about this case. The banker secured the privilege of delaying the journey another week, that Bob might get more strength from Bible study and from contact with the converts of the Christian League, whose enthusiasm to fulfill their motto, "Mounting Heavenward," knew no faltering.

"Our last lesson stopped where Jesus was riding up to the foot of Mount Moriah," said Mrs. Brown, as they sat about the table to resume the study of Christ's passion week. "He did not reach the temple court until toward evening. He entered into the temple, and when he had looked about, it being now eventide, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve. Blessed Bethany, where Jesus found one hearthstone of peace around which loving friends welcomed him out of the darkness of

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night ! But early morning found him returning to the temple."

Then the class followed our Lord from day to day till he came to the cross. There was a solemn hush upon them unlike any other lesson. They questioned the teacher almost in a whisper. Back and forth they walked with the Master as, weary and hungry, often hunted and hounded by official spies, he went to those wonderful lessons in the temple during this last week.

"What again was his first recorded act when Jesus returned to the temple that second day?" asked the leader.

"Cleansing the temple," replied Barton Brown. "And when before did we find Jesus performing this same symbolic act?"

"It was three years before," said Amelia, "when he came to the first Passover to begin his public ministry."

Then they talked together how this searching lesson of cleansing the temple, symbol of a clean, pure heart for Christ's abode, began and ended his visits to Jerusalem.

"On the way to the temple at early dawn that Monday morning," said the leader, "Jesus with the disciples hungered. As they passed a fig tree having leaves but no fruit, our Lord took occasion to teach us a great truth.

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It was Christ's only miracle of judgment, and he graciously let that fall on a tree instead of upon the sinner, but it was full of prophecy of what must come to the fruitless pretender. The tree bearing nothing but leaves at once withered. 'He made it the eternal warning against a life of hypocrisy continued until it was too late.' Instead of teaching that Jesus did not know that there was no fruit till he came to the tree with disappointment, it more clearly teaches that he knew what was in the heart of Judas that base pretender who walked by his side, and taught him, as every other hypocrite, that doom hastens.

"Little is recorded of Monday's teaching in the temple, more than its cleansing, except that the blind and the lame came to him and were healed. It was clearly a busy day ; why is so little recorded? Was it not that we might see more clearly the lesson of the withering fig tree ? On Tuesday morning as they returned to the temple, they tarried again beside the withered tree. When the disciples marvelled at the sudden death of the tree at the word of Jesus, the Lord told them there was also here a lesson of faith, to expect great things in answer to believing prayer.

"Tuesday was a wonderful day in Christ's teaching. Parables of warning, woes upon

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hypocrites, answers of confusion to carping critics, words of entreaty to hesitating seekers, announcement of the uplifted cross and of the approaching doom of the city—all combine to make this the day of days in the recorded words of our Lord. But as evening came Jesus again turned toward Bethany. He climbed the mount of Olives and sat upon the grass looking back upon the city gilded by the setting sun. Four of the disciples came to him and here Jesus preached to this little group his most wonderful sermon.”

Then the class opened their Bibles to this other mountain discourse that Matthew so carefully records, ending with that vivid picture of the great day when the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him. When one of the class asked if Jesus had only an audience of four when he uttered these wonderful words, Mrs. Brown continued :

“ Turn to Mark and see that picture : ‘ And as he sat on the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately,’ to explain to them more fully that wonderful day of his coming. This little group studying his life in this room until we are bound in new ties of love to our Lord, makes it more real. He had discourses for the crowds, but his greatest

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lessons of love and light were given to single souls or little groups met as we are to-night."

Then she read the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew with its heart-searching lessons of the ten virgins, the talents used or buried, and the King on the throne welcoming to heaven the faithful, and dooming the thoughtless. Never before had these words such weight as when they saw the Lord uttering them to just such a little group of young disciples as themselves. So softly and tenderly did Mrs. Brown read the chapter that her words seemed to be dropping from the Master's own lips; and henceforth to them living to give only a cup of cold water in his name seemed more glorious than richest wealth or highest fame.

Then they passed to Wednesday, but found no record of Jesus leaving Bethany. "It must have been a day of quiet meditation in view of the awful days to follow, but possibly to give the people opportunity to think over the warnings and parables of Tuesday," said Mrs. Brown.

They then sought for Jesus on Thursday, but found no special instruction till the evening supper. From that upper room, so rich in sacred memory, they followed Jesus out at midnight into the garden of Gethsemane. They sought not to lift that veil more than to read the words through tears. They went

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with Jesus through the mock trial, and saw him crowned with thorns and spit upon and smitten upon the face. They walked near by when he fainted beneath the heavy cross. At last they came to the scene where he was lifted up between two thieves.

“Christ’s seven sayings upon the cross,” said Mrs. Brown, “are the crowning glory of his character and teaching. The first word uttered amid that awful agony was his prayer, ‘Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do.’ Well is it said :

“Great words of love were heard,
Which many a bosom stirred,
And more and more each circling year
Have bowed the heart to hear.”

Then they passed to that second saying on the cross, “Woman, behold thy son ! . . . Behold thy mother !” With tender pathos the leader spoke of Jesus forgetting his own agony to assure the kindly care of the dear mother who stood weeping at the cross. “The Christian son,” said she, “has often tenderly and affectionately cared for his aged mother, because of these gracious words of our Lord. He was dying, not only for sin’s atonement, but also to speak words that would awaken sympathy for all the world’s sorrow.”

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Then they passed to the third saying, "Verily I say unto thee, this day shalt thou be with me in paradise." As Mrs. Brown portrayed the two thieves crucified, one joining in the jeers of the scoffers and the other confessing his sin and praying for the kindly thought of his Lord, she touched every heart. The scene of the court-room the past week, when the judge sent Tim Hughes to the penitentiary, and then speaking words of sympathy and encouragement, put Robert Jones into the hands of Banker Bancroft to give him a year at the reformatory under the best Christian care—all this illustrated the difference between penitent and impenitent thieves even at the bar of civil justice.

Robert Jones now bowed his head upon the table and wept aloud. Never before had this scene of Jesus speaking these words to the penitent thief attracted his attention. He recalled how Tim Hughes had been led away in irons to be locked up in the penitentiary, and thought of his own privilege with these kind friends in Banker Bancroft's pleasant home, and that Jesus was speaking words of forgiveness to his penitent heart. His faith had swept away the centuries and he felt that he was now standing beside the cross, and he himself the thief that was clinging to the gracious promise.

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They were all silent for a few moments, when Robert said : “ Mrs. Brown, is Jesus speaking these words to me ? ”

“ O Robert,” she replied, “ I can almost hear his voice to-night. Never before have I seemed to stand so near Calvary and feel so assured that Jesus is now dwelling with us clothed in this sacred word ! ” Then the lesson ended by their forming the circle, repeating their poem, and singing the favorite hymn.

That night Bob remained in the Bancroft mansion occupying the guest-chamber. In the morning when he awoke he recalled the scene in “ Pilgrim’s Progress ” which he had read with his mother, when Christian was in the Palace Beautiful : “ Thus they discoursed together till late at night, and after they had committed themselves to their Lord for protection, they betook themselves to rest. The pilgrim they laid in a large upper chamber, whose window opened toward the sun-rising. The name of the chamber was Peace, where he slept till break of day, and then he awoke and sang :

“ Where am I now ? Is this the love and care
Of Jesus, for the men that pilgrims are,
Thus to provide, that I should be forgiven,
And dwell already the next door to heaven ! ”

CHAPTER XXVII

IT IS FINISHED

BEFORE this closing lesson Mr. Bancroft had returned from his visit with Bob to the reformatory. As they came into the library to begin study the banker told of his trip. Being personally acquainted with the superintendent, he had given him a complete account of Bob's conversion, of his bright mind, his fair scholarship, and ardent desire for usefulness.

“Robert's manly face and modest bearing,” said Mr. Bancroft, “at once won the superintendent's esteem. His trusted private clerk was just leaving, and Robert was needed for this important place. I left him fully installed in this post of honor, and his position will make him an inmate of the cultured Christian family of the superintendent. The boy is happy and useful, and the year will give him great improvement.”

“Had this trial occurred six months ago,” said Mrs. Brown, “before this little group of friends had joined hands to mount heavenward, I fear we could not have received this

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report. We can resume our study feeling that Jesus' words to the penitent thief have been again spoken in our very midst. Instead of wearing the stripes of dishonor behind prison bars, Robert Jones has been lifted to a very paradise of happy and honored association in this refined family."

Another joy had come to Mrs. Brown the past week. Barton had been called to pass through a severe temptation since becoming a Christian. His schoolmates, knowing his old fiery temper, had planned to tease and anger him by calling him "deacon," or "parson." For several days his mother had noticed that Barton seemed distant and cold, and less interested in their home devotions. He was again more easily irritated over little annoyances. She had not known the trial that was vexing his new faith, but to him it was as fierce as the persecutions that led great saints to burn at the stake.

But during the past week while they were studying the lesson of Jesus coming to the cross, Barton noticed for the first time the words of our Lord to Peter on that dark night of his denial: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." Again and again these words

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kept coming up in Barton's thoughts. One evening he retired early, in order to be alone in his gloom. He dropped upon his bed, almost in malice toward his annoying school-mates. As he lay thinking that he would leave school and home, to go where nobody would know that he ever thought of being a Christian, the words of Jesus came so vividly to his mind, as if spoken to himself, "Barton, Barton, behold, Satan hath desired to have *you*, that he may sift you as wheat ; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not."

He at once recalled the sight of Tim Hughes led to the train in chains, with his wicked eye flashing revenge, while the sheriff hastened him off to the penitentiary. He thought of Bob Jones turning to the Saviour and confessing his sin, and then coming to Mr. Bancroft's to join hands with Christian friends, every one trusting him again. Barton at once dropped upon his knees at the side of his bed to take up his neglected prayer. The Saviour's words, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not," he could feel as a present reality. He thought of his deriding playmates, and prayed, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." A new flood of joy came into Barton Brown's soul, deeper than he had ever known.

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He lay down again upon the bed and called his mother. She came with anxiety. Then Barton told her all his struggle for the past several days and what a change had now come to his mind through these words of his Saviour. Then he asked her to forgive him that he had grieved her by bitter words that day.

Then Mrs. Brown understood it all and told him that if he asked for patience to bear these words of sport, these very boys would soon come to respect him as they never had before. Then his mother prayed at his bedside that he might have strength for to-morrow's temptation and kissed him good-night. The next day his happy trust shone again in his face, and he returned from school a victor over the tempter and stronger than ever in his upward march.

"Our lesson," said the leader, "was cut short last week, at Jesus' third saying on the cross, by Robert Jones sobbing aloud that he was the thief to whom Jesus was now speaking those words. We must take time now to see that our Saviour then went down into an agony of soul too deep for our comprehension. The sun darkened at noonday, that the world might feel the awfulness of that hour. Then four other sayings fell from his lips: 'My

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God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' 'I thirst.' 'It is finished.' 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.' As Jesus yielded up his spirit the earth quaked and the veil in the temple that concealed the holy of holies was rent in twain. As the darkness that had been over them for three hours passed away, they looked and Jesus was dead. The centurion in charge cried out, 'Truly this was the Son of God.'

"It was Friday afternoon and the next day was the Jewish Sabbath. When it was known to all that Jesus was now dead, Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man who had become a disciple, went to Pilate; and Nicodemus, who came to Jesus at the first Passover, went with him. These two secured an order for the body, and went and buried Jesus in a new tomb hewn out of the rock. As wise men came to worship at Bethlehem, so noblemen came to weep at his burial.

"But Jesus had said at the beginning of his ministry, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,' and had now for a whole year been plainly teaching that he must go unto Jerusalem and be killed and the third day rise again; therefore his enemies set a watch about the tomb. That his friends might not take his body away, they put a seal on the

It is Finished

door, to break which was death. Then the disciples waited through that long Sabbath, wondering what his oft-repeated words of 'rising again' might mean.

"But early on the first day of the week, when they came to the sepulcher, behold, the stone was rolled away, and the body of Jesus was not there. Quickly the news passed from one to another, and his most loving friends were hastening to see the empty tomb. And lo, Jesus met one and another and said, 'All hail! Fear not; go tell my brethren they shall see me!'"

Then this class that had followed Christ through these years of toil and teaching until they had come to trust in every trial, now drank in every word of the risen Lord with the same sweet sense of his presence as did the men on that first day, walking to Emmaus, who said one to another, "Did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?"

They followed on to the day of his ascension, and listened with intense delight to the Master's parting words, "I ascend to my Father and your Father," "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," "Ye are my witnesses," "Lo, I am with you always,

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even unto the end of the world," "Tarry until ye be endued with power from on high."

"Now," said Mrs. Brown, "let us take these closing words of Luke: 'And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them and carried up into heaven, and they worshipped him.'"

Here the leader reversed the blackboard and presented the following outline of their previous study :

THE LIFE OF JESUS.

His Character : Son of Man, Son of God, Lamb of God.

His Mission : To reveal (1) A Perfect Human Life ; (2) The True God ; (3) An Atoning Sacrifice.

FIVE-FOLD DIVISION.

1. From Birth to Baptism.
2. From Baptism to First Passover.
3. First year of Public Ministry, or from Cleansing the Temple to Bethesda, at Second Passover.
4. Second year of Ministry, from Bethesda to Feeding the Five Thousand, the time of Third Passover.
5. Third year of Ministry, from Announc-

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ing the "eating his flesh" to his Death and Resurrection.

Remember, "White and Blue and Crimson Thread Years."

Then after taking notes of this, Mrs. Brown and her class sat conversing of the happy changes that had come since first they met in this library to begin this study, only a few months ago. The past Sabbath had been Easter, and on that day Pastor Little had welcomed one hundred and twenty-four new converts to his membership. The work had commenced in this room by the faithful study of the life of Jesus.

A great congregation meets every Tuesday evening in the church, in a service called "Half-hours with the Christ," which is followed by Pastor Little's "Personal Conversation Meeting." Fannie Brown's happy thought of a Christian League, composed of young converts with one aim, "To know and follow Jesus," and one motto, "Mounting Heavenward," which began with two members, has widened to a great company, who often join hands in pledge of mutual help, as they

Climb the ladder by which we rise
From the lowly earth to the vaulted skies.

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George Bancroft has delayed going to Yale for another year, and has been appointed assistant principal of the high school. Fannie Brown has received the gift of a scholarship to complete her studies at Wellesley, when she chooses to go. But the "shining heights" to which she now aspires to follow her ideal of excellence are not some dazzling pinnacle of worldly fame. They both long that hand in hand they may "climb the steeps of the heavenly way."

THE END

